

Twenty-four Hour Seduction: WhatsApp Status and the Communicative Force of Fleeting Memory in a Digital Diary

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ABSTRACT

Aim of the Study: Keeping a diary is not a strong creative forte for many people. Those who keep one rarely make it public. Diaries, most times, denote secrets and contain unpleasant messages, and are not usually meant for public consumption. The age of internet and social media, especially WhatsApp, has put paid to that. WhatsApp status of many users in Nigeria has taken over the concept of keeping diary, revealing personal secrets and all manners of emotional challenges of individuals and serving as advertising and sales outlets, all within a twenty-four hour time frame.

Methodology: This study adopted the displacement media theory and the key informant interview (KII) research method. The paper studied WhatsApp status of individuals in the authors' phone contacts randomly selected in order to show how closely this twenty-four hour fleeting information affects perception.

Findings: Findings show that apart from those who use their WhatsApp status for advertising and sundry marketing and publicity, most users were ignorant of likely consequences of their posts beyond self-expression.

Conclusion: The paper concluded that WhatsApp status updates are one of the ways individuals made themselves relevant and busy much like using a diary.

Keywords: Communication, Digital diary, Internet/Social media, Perception, Nigeria, WhatsApp status.

Introduction

Human beings, from creation, have always been excited by their work and creativity. It is as a result of this that humans enjoy documenting whatever they have achieved over time for themselves and posterity. Moreover, it is important to draw some kind of schedule to guide them, focused and on track since they are highly mobile. Again, there is the likelihood and tendency to forget hence the need to keep records (Yeo, 2021). Keeping records did not begin with literacy, however, as early man was known to draw patterns on walls and stones of his house as a form of keeping records (N. Achebe et al., 2018). Achebe (1958) in *Things Fall Apart* documented how Unoka, Okonkwo's father kept record of his debts by

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drawing lines of various sizes in order to identify both debtor and amount owed. This practice was common with most people prior to the discovery of writing. In Nigeria, before the advent of literacy, people kept records by using various symbols that made it easy for them to recall the event in question. The concept of keeping diary in modern times is not unconnected with human beings' adventurous nature as travellers. Memory is short and could add or subtract from actuality while the same memory once frozen in print stays fresh each time one returns to it. This is one of the challenges of pre-literate African history: its dependence on oral narrative, being prone to the ability of the storyteller to recall.

In the process of recall via oral narrative, something must give. The narrator either adds or removes and so a new story is told, not exactly the original and not altogether fabricated. Discussing the African writer's reliance on oral narrative, Nwachukwu-Agbada cites Achebe:

There are many sources that a writer uses. I cannot even name all the sources I use....Most are oral. There are people in my village today who can claim aspects of my work because it is their story. My parents can claim part of it. But what is even more important is our tradition, the Igbo tradition, which can claim 90% of it, because that is the tradition that created the framework in which this sort of thing can happen (1987, p. 68).

Thus, keeping diary is in the bid to relieve the brain of its burden of recall as well as reduce its storage space.

One of the most vital attributes of human beings is the ability to keep records and document events using various media. Indeed, it is out of the desire to keep records in permanent form that writing/printing was invented (Forrester, 2020). The act of documentation and keeping records of individual and societal achievements could also be said to be responsible for the invention of libraries, archives, vaults of various types, diaries, memoirs, autobiographies and biographies among other means of keeping records for posterity (Velmurugan, 2012) Keeping diary is not a regular or common pastime. However, various reasons compel people to keep diaries. One of which is not unconnected to recording events that would otherwise not be in the interest of some powers to be made known to the public; reveal or expose individual demons and the joy of having access to information that would otherwise remain secret if undocumented and humanity would be worse off for it. There is also the element of keeping secret, the desire to hide something from somebody for whatever reason. Closely related to keeping secret is also a group of people, commonly called mud-rakers, who take pleasure in discovering and exposing other people's secrets. Some diaries remain undiscovered and some naturally become public. One recalls such works as the prison notes of Nigeria's Nobel Laureate, Wole Soyinka, titled, *The Man Died* (Hayden, 1975; Soyinka, 1976)

The desire and love of keeping a diary, for some people, is underscored by the hope that one day it would get into the right hands and its content would be made known to the appropriate authority or to the public. This is usually the case with many prison notes/diaries. Depending on its content, this exposure may engender further action, which may bring about a change. This accounts for why a prisoner on death row, for instance, can make every effort and incur terrible punishment to keep a diary. The examples of Jews in Auswitz, Germany; the prison notes of Nelson Mandela, and many others, easily come to mind. Nevertheless, these have come down to us in their permanent forms as books. Some writers adopt the creative mode and style of keeping a diary in their novels. The example of Mariama Ba's *So Long a Letter* comes to mind; there is also *The Diary of Anne Frank*, among others. The idea of and reasons for updating one's WhatsApp Status is not unlike those for keeping diaries. Indeed, the reasons for status updates range far more than those for keeping diaries to embrace advertising, sales promotion, publicity, and other marketing and promotion services as well as entertainment and self-expression, all within a time frame of 24 hours! Hence the full title of this work which is "Twenty-Four Hour Seduction: WhatsApp Status and the Communicative Force of Fleeting Memory in a Digital Diary." Unfortunately, many of those studied here are innocently unaware of the act of keeping a diary as well as unmindful of the effects

of their posts beyond those involved in sales promotion and advertising. WhatsApp status updates sadly have an uncanny knack for letting viewers into the innermost recesses of the owner's unconscious mental state.

There is therefore, a remarkable shift from the traditional or conventional approach of keeping diary, both in purpose and focus, to a fleeting, temporal, and shiftless mode reminiscent of electronic media messages. The concept of keeping diary as a means of communication and documentation has not really enjoyed wide academic, scholarly, or professional patronage, yet it has thrived. With the invention of the internet (Cohen-Almagor, 2011), with its paraphernalia of social media platforms, diary keeping has taken on a different dimension. This study therefore sets out to examine one of the new ways of keeping and recording personal feelings even if fleetingly and unconsciously through WhatsApp status updates of individuals/Nigerians in the researchers' phonebook contact.

In the process of researching this work, we took time to interview many of those in our phone contacts whose WhatsApp status form part of our 'infortainment' engagement. The question was: "*Prior to the evolution of WhatsApp and other social media handles used to document information, have you ever kept a diary?*"

While many averred that they had never shown interest in keeping diaries and were not conscious of the connection between their WhatsApp status and keeping diary, one contact narrated his experience in diary keeping. According to him, his diary keeping came to an end as a result of chance discovery. He had inadvertently stumbled on a piece of paper meant as a 'diary' which was kept by his father. The piece of paper/diary contained just one information in his elder sister's handwriting, the content of which he recalled was, "Oparanwata killed my goat because my goat ate his yam."

This discovery was made after both his father and Oparanwata had passed on. Now, the two families were in very good terms, helping each other in many respects. The questions/observations, which arose, were:

- a. His father was bitter over the killing of his goat and kept the 'diary' so his children would see and revenge.
- b. Did Oparanwata warn his father to tether his goat before killing it?
- c. How many yams were eaten?
- d. Was there an earlier misunderstanding between the two men?

Not being able to get satisfactory answers to the posers, the interviewee concluded that keeping diary was not a noble act and gave up the practice. Asked if there was a connection with his WhatsApp status? He said he had not thought of it and that whatever was posted only endured for twenty-four hours unless someone else chose to save it for such person's purposes. For him, therefore, there is little similarity between keeping a diary, which is in more or less a permanent form than WhatsApp status, which endures for just twenty-four hours. Moreover, if the status update was directed at a particular person, such person may not view it or may not even have data at the time, he concluded.

Whetmore (1987) makes us understand that humans have always been fascinated with the idea of record keeping. As he puts it, "We human beings have always had the urge to keep records of ourselves, our friends, our dreams. Inside each of us is a secret archivist; we like to collect things that prove our accomplishments are of lasting value. This is one important function of books which it shares with photographs: to help us preserve in permanent form our achievements and things which are dear and valuable to us, whether they be tangible or intangible like memories. Indeed, diaries help to keep our memory fresh, serving as visual prodding and memory juggler of all time. However, the words in a diary are captured in print and frozen for all ages; not so those in this digital diary of WhatsApp status updates. They move like stillbirth that cannot be relied upon to stay and like *Abiku/Ogbanje*, they are coming and going for several seasons (Afolayan, 2014; Faniran & Adetuyi, 2017), all in one day!

The thrust of this paper is to determine the reasons which motivate people into engaging in status updates, the frequency of such updates and the outcomes there-from for those engaged in it. Also, whether there is a relationship between WhatsApp status updates and diary keeping by those interviewed? This was done by interviewing those randomly selected in the authors' phone contact in the hope of getting answers to the above posers.

The Evolution of the Internet/Social Media in Nigeria

Over the years, human beings have made several and wonderful inroads in matters of communication. This is because communication is at the nexus of humanity's well-being and continued interactive relationship with fellow humans and even with machines. The communications revolution saw humanity moving from stone carving to the most technologically sophisticated mode of the communication experience, which is the internet with its array of social media platforms. Humans have therefore challenged and outdone themselves by moving from 'snail' speed, in terms of communication, to the speed of light; mixing personal with mass communication. Equally blending audio and visual, print/graphics with images and almost swamping selves with the various modes of communication thereby confirming McLuhan's position that the media are not only the message, but also the message (Baran, 2002; Sandywell, 2015). Claire (1990) details the historical evolution of the internet from its earliest origin at the School of Engineering and Applied Sciences at the University of California, Los Angeles, in 1969 and was known as the ARPANET to its present state of the art sophistication as communications masterpiece. The internet, also shortened as the NET, has continued to get better and better and makes the communication experience an exciting and entertaining means of interaction and sharing of information, ideas, services, fun, etcetera, covering the best and worst of human experience.

The internet became a significant part of communication in Nigeria in the later part of the 20th century (Adomi, 2005). However, pervasive use of the internet in Nigeria was made possible through the introduction of the Global System of Mobile Telecommunications (GSM) by the Olusegun Obasanjo led democratic regime in 2001 (Bakare, Ekanem, & Allen, 2017), and effectively displaced the analogue telephone of the 19th century. At first, possession of the GSM handset was a class thing and evidence of ostentation as only the rich could afford it. At that time of its introduction a Subscriber Identity Module or Subscriber Identification Module card (SIM Card) was sold for as much as Twenty Thousand Naira (₦20,000.00). But today, it is officially free though some operators charge a token for registration. The possession of an android phone has liberated the citizens in all areas of telephonic communication and made it possible for them to unleash their creative ingenuity, warts and all on humanity. This liberation is better appreciated by those born before the internet revolution that experienced long queues at the post offices, in order to get access to the analogue telephonic system to reach their loved ones and business partners. "The social media have come to offer the rural semiliterate and even the complete illiterate Nigerian the freedom of expression which was not available to him/her with the traditional media" (Anyanwu & Ibagere, 2021, p. 122).

The Concept of Keeping Diary

The *Oxford Dictionary Thesaurus & Wordpower Guide* (2000, p. 338) says that a diary is "a book in which one keeps a daily record of events and experience; a book marked with each day's date, in which to note appointments." Drawing from the above definition one can say that a diary is a daily record of a person's activities, sometimes captured in detail and sometimes recording only the highlights. It is a disciplined style of writing which ensures that no day passes by without an entry. For some people, should a day's entry escape their busy schedule, they normally made up for it before proceeding to the next entry. Good enough, a day old memory can be recalled to the minute's detail. On its part, Merriam Webster online dictionary, in one of its definitions, sees diary as "a record of events, transactions, or observations kept daily or at frequent intervals: JOURNAL, *especially*: a daily record of personal activities, reflections, or feelings." It further defines it as a book intended or used for a diary," (emphasis

in the original). Daniel J. Boorstin began the second volume of his trilogy *The American: The National Experience* (1965), with an obvious entry from a diary. It reads:

In 1845, The Emigrant's Guide to Oregon and California recorded Lansford W. Hastings' experience with his company of one hundred and sixty who set out overland from Independence, Missouri, on May 16, 1842. Now, all was high glee, jocular hilarity, and happy anticipation, as we thus darted forward... (Boorstin, 1965, p. 1).

The citation above sets the tone and narrative technique of writing a diary. It generally reads like the explanation of a situation in drama before the opening dialogue. It provided the reader with salient detail at short notice.

Diary writing invariably adopts the first person narrative point of view, as it is nearly always a record of personal experience. It usually has such information as date, time, locale, character identification, detailed and precise description of persons and events, and depending on the writer, dialogue. Its attention to detail makes it attractive to historians, novelists, scientific or science fiction filmmakers, documentary and ethnographic filmmakers, archaeologists and others who easily see in it a ready source of reliable information. Keeping a diary is taxing, requiring discipline, commitment, being observant and having an eye for details. It takes discipline, some form of rigid commitment and focus to settle down after a hard day's work to record the events as they occurred within the day. Good and experienced diarists hardly miss a day's entry. Indeed, some, depending on the time available to them and the event, adopt a journalistic style and write on the spot as the events unfold. This, perhaps, accounts for why diaries are highly sought after for information among scholars and other researchers already identified above. Diaries provide facts in their fresh form as they occur.

Theoretical Framework

The mobility and dynamism of human experience is no better manifested than in the area of communication. At any era when new discoveries are made in the area of communication, there is always the fear that the old would be displaced by the new. The invention of radio for example did not stop people from talking/speaking; the discovery of film medium did not negatively affect television nor did the invention of the internet lead to the much touted paperless society. Indeed, the much touted death of space/distance due to the invention of the internet is becoming questionable as people are now 'prisoners' of the media (social media), rather being liberated. This is so because the social media have come to bring people in distant places 'closer' while distancing hitherto close relations. In the area of print, it is much the same. This means that, rather than displace, the media more often than not complement each other. For instance, nearly all the social media platforms have elements of print/graphics, visual art, motion, audio, as well as interactive resources. It, therefore, means that none is complete without aspects of the other rather each aspect contributes its quota for a richer and more effective information and entertainment experience. Notwithstanding all this however, the most appropriate theory for this paper remains time displacement theory propounded by Robert Putnam in 1995 where he posits that television displaced some of the time spent listening to radio (Juanes, 2003; Newell, Pilotta, & Thomas, 2008).

Our research reveals that time spent on social media displaces time for other activities such as academic work, although some respondents (students) claim they use their handsets to read their lecture notes, having either taken screenshots of other students' notes, downloaded PDF materials or browse and surf the internet for academic materials. Some students, we found out, use their handsets as 'notebooks' writing directly in their phones! It also displaces time spent in interaction with colleagues, course mates and others and increases time spent with virtual contacts thereby increasing individual and solitary behaviour as against collective and physical interactive relations. This is also evident in families where parents and children would engross in their mobile phones rather than share ideas and engage in conversation with one another (Siraj, 2018). In their support of this position of time displacement on interaction while engaging more in television viewing, the trio of Moy, Scheufele and Holbert (1999, p.

27) similarly project Putnam's (1995a, 1995b) (sic) view, "that television viewing has privatized our leisure time and is the only activity inhibiting participation outside the home."

Displacement is defined in this study as the permanent replacement of one medium by another medium over time for some specific functions of the medium. For example, television displaced radio as the medium for soap operas. Yet, radio and television coexist to serve different functions to the consumers. Displacement is different from substitution in that substitution is a temporary replacement of one medium by another, but displacement is a permanent replacement of a medium by another medium after a period of time when it is perceived by population as meeting their needs better in serving the same function (Ha & Fang, 2012).

To further illustrate this point of displacement, in Nigeria, as in nearly every nation of the world, the Global System of Mobile Telecommunication (GSM) with its digital connection has effectively displaced the analogue telephonic system. Following from the above definition of displacement and substitution by Ha and Fang, that displacement is a permanent replacement rather than temporary or substitution, the authors contend that the concept of keeping diary has been displaced by WhatsApp status updates. This needs some explanation given that majority of our respondents had not hitherto been keeping diary, at least, not consciously. But for the few that kept diaries, the WhatsApp updates serve their objectives effectively. Thus, for those not in the habit of keeping diary before now, WhatsApp status has introduced the habit while for the few who kept, the status updates have completely displaced it with much more fun. The purpose is the same but the objectives are clearly at variance and different. Unlike the diary, however, there is too much hyping and falsehood in the WhatsApp status updates as many people live a lie, some deliberately, some ignorantly and some out rightly mischievously. Nobody wants others to see them as they really are. It is, therefore, a world of self-deceit and delusion, unlike the act of keeping a diary, which serves for them as confidants and confessors.

For majority of our respondents/interviewees, however, one could not say the practice of diary keeping was displaced since they never kept one. Rather, it was a novel experience for them and fun as well. However, for the few who did, it was quite applicable. Nonetheless, for the few 1/3 of the respondents, the fun of keeping diary lay in the secrecy and later discovery of it by intimate friends. This secret aspect of the diary was partially taken care of by WhatsApp, where viewers were required to write secret, anonymous messages to the owner. The fun then lay in making some of these secret messages public via updates of the owner's status. Notwithstanding, few of the respondents said they regretted the loss of the act of diary keeping. It made one focused, dedicated, committed, and even faithful in documenting daily activities. WhatsApp status could hardly accommodate more than a paragraph of daily occurrence especially on an eventful day, they said. What Howard, cited in Vacker (2011), said about television several decades ago is still relevant today. According to him:

Because the only truth you know is what you get over this tube. (...) Television is not the truth. Television is a God damned amusement park. Television is a circus, a carnival, a travelling troupe of acrobats, storytellers, dancers, singers, jugglers, sideshow freaks, lion tamers, and football players. We're in the boredom killing business (Vacker, 2011, p. 85).

The social media have come, not only to kill boredom but also to teach us new ways of living a lie. Whereas keeping diary creates room for the writer to share his deepest, even darkest secrets to his Diary in a confidential and friendly manner, the social media through WhatsApp status have eroded that wonderful pastime. It has, however, put in its place a 24-hour menagerie of seduction that passes even before the reader and viewer have had time to grasp the content. And once it is past after the time frame, it is gone unless one has the foresight to screen shoot or copy it before it fleets away.

Research Method

Research Design

During the course of this study, the researchers used key informant interviews (KII) as well as participant observation research methods. The universe of the study covered several hundreds of contacts in the researchers' phone contact who cut across the thirty-six states of Nigeria and the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, and a few diasporians. This figure came up to six thousand, seven hundred and fifty-six (6, 756) made up as follows:

- i. lead author, one thousand eight hundred and forty-two (1,842),
- ii. second author, two thousand, three hundred and forty-seven (2, 347) and,
- iii. corresponding author, one thousand, five hundred and sixty-seven (1, 567).

It must be noted that not all those in the phone contacts have android phones and some of those who have neither use WhatsApp nor update their WhatsApp status and a few, particularly students and siblings, perhaps, not comfortable with reprimands arising from their updates, blocked the researchers from viewing their status. For instance, one user posted, "condoms suck, just get 1 partner and hit it raw forever." When reprimanded, claimed that as an adult he had the right to post whatever he deemed fit. Such reprimands generally lead to the viewer being blocked.

Sample Size

The sample size was purposively chosen with concentration on the 'fanatic' WhatsApp status update addicts. The actual WhatsApp users comprised three hundred and fifty, (350), four hundred and thirty-one (431) and two hundred and thirty (230), respectively, totalling one thousand and eleven users. (1,011). The number constituted the real population. From this, we took 10% as our actual sample, which is one hundred and one (101), studied over a three-month period. The actual sample size of 101 was those who were considered 'addicts' of status updates. In the KII approach questions were fielded to respondents. Such questions included:

RQ 1: Have you ever kept a diary? If yes, is there any relationship between your diary keeping and your WhatsApp status updates?

RQ 2: Do you still keep diary in the light of your frequent update of your WhatsApp status?

RQ 3: Why and how frequently do you update your WhatsApp status?

RQ 4: Are there similarities in keeping a diary and updating your WhatsApp status?

RQ 5: Do you know the implications of some of the things you post?

This last question was for those who seem to post some indecent, pornographic and out-rightly 'unacceptable' materials. These they refer to as 'cruise' or for the fun of it.

Results and Discussion

WhatsApp Status as Digital Diary

WhatsApp is a messaging application available mostly to Smart phones and Windows running computers. Thota and Divatia (2015, p. 363) hold the view that the App was "introduced mainly to text, exchange photos, videos and voice note." The fleeting nature of its status update is the attraction for the study as it is quite unlike other social media handles and also of the main WhatsApp content where users can go back and revisit their posts. This is with reference to those whose message setting was not on 'disappearing' mode. Nevertheless, the WhatsApp status, on the other hand, becomes irretrievable once the sun has risen and set on it except where it is copied or screenshot for safekeeping. This is what makes

it uniquely different from actual diary. Whereas the WhatsApp chat can stay as long as the receiver wants, the status is preset and programmed to endure for just twenty-four hours by the service providers.

WhatsApp was founded in 2009 by Brian Acton and Jan Koum (Pahwa, 2019; 'WhatsApp', 2018). The company's name, WhatsApp, puns on the English colloquial greeting, "What's up?" (Pahwa, 2019), meaning, what is wrong; what's going on/happening or, what is worrying you? This question is answered variously and in diverse ways in people's WhatsApp Status updates. Whereas the diary is permanent and personal to the writer, and can only be accessed by the person to whom the writer makes it available, unless it is published, the WhatsApp status is available to all who are in the owner's phone contact and are on WhatsApp, unless such contact is blocked from accessing the status updates. Unlike the diary however, the status, most times, carries with it graphics, video, audio and motion. The audio and motion components are absent in the diary but not the visual as diaries contain images depending on the writer's inclination. Again, the images, graphics, audio-visual contents of the WhatsApp status are all temporary, having a 24-hour lifespan. For all that, they are engaging, entertaining and informative. In other words, they are more than a diary. Unlike the diary which when published becomes a mass medium and accessible to all, these updates have some elements of both interpersonal and mass communication about them; they are addressed to one and to all simultaneously. Part of the secret in the WhatsApp status is that sometimes the information, though in the public domain, is addressed to a particular person. It can be either as a direct message or as response to one. It is left for the person addressed to understand and respond.

Their interpersonal touch arises from the fact that some of the messages contained in the updates are directed at specific persons in the phone book/contact. Sometimes, they are complaints directed at no one in particular beyond the expression of frustration or whatever else. For instance, on the 5th of October 2021 when WhatsApp, Facebook and Instagram, had challenges of network and became inaccessible to their various patrons for about six hours, some patrons experienced mild panic, some changed networks thinking it was network problem. A WhatsApp status update of one contact captures the frustration of those few hours as follows: "My power button dne hear whineeeeeee today. I restarted my phone over a million times. I tot it was MTN, Omo, I cursed their souls ehn." In plain English the message reads, *My phone button has suffered today. I restarted my phone a million times. I thought it was MTN, mehn, I cursed their souls for real.*

The six hours without network service from WhatsApp created mild panic among patrons and led to massive downloading and joining of Telegram App. Those hours of non-service and again, the network failure of Mobile Telecommunications Nigeria, (MTN) on the 9th of October 2021, saw people engage in network switching by getting alternative SIM cards from other network service providers to be on the safe side.

It has been reiterated by the authors here and elsewhere that the trouble with Nigeria is simply that of bad and visionless leadership (C. Achebe, 1987). The Nigerian telecommunication users especially the General System of Mobile-telecommunication (GSM) is perhaps, the most unfortunate in the world as they are billed for all manners of services rendered and not rendered as well as for unconnected and faulty networks. They have no one to run to and so take their frustrations to social media by way of complaints, jokes, and curses. As shown above. Indeed, Nigerians are the epitome of suffering and patience having been tested and tried through their epileptic power supply from National Electricity Power Authority (NEPA) now known as Power Holding Corporation of Nigeria (PHCN). Their 'holding power' is part of the challenges of GSM phone users as sometimes to get electricity to charge a phone battery is a big challenge. Thus, Power Bank manufacturers and sellers key into this weakness to defraud Nigerians of their hard-earned money. WhatsApp status update was one major outlet to pour out their frustrations and disappointments with network service providers since for them, the justice system was a no-go-area. They therefore, take to social media platforms to unleash their frustrations through abuses, insults and complaints, jokes and sarcasms.

The entries in a diary generally carry calendar information such as day, date, sometimes, hour and a heading or title; the diarist faithfully records all these entries. In the case of WhatsApp status, however, such detailed information is recorded automatically and the owner has the added advantage of knowing those who viewed or read such person's status even when the viewer or reader left no comment. This is a privilege the diarist never had. They had no way of knowing who read their diary especially when published unless contacted. Unlike the diary, which can contain several words, even chapters depending on the events of a given day, the WhatsApp status update does not contain more than seven (700) hundred characters at a time which can just be equated to a short paragraph. For the videos, the duration per view once uploaded is no more than thirty (30) seconds. Irrespective of the number of entries of video, audio links or graphics, the entire package endures just one day. Twenty-four (24) hours and it becomes history unless reposted. The questions that beg to be asked are: Given the ephemeral and fleeting nature of WhatsApp status updates, why do some people religiously update their status? Why do some also almost addictively follow such updates?

In the course of doing this research, we pored through thousands of WhatsApp status updates in our phone contacts individually and collectively before settling on the sample size of one hundred and one (101) which were purposively chosen. We also spoke to many people in our phone contacts just to get answers to the questions posed earlier. We will attempt some summary of the reasons why people never miss to update their status; some would rather starve than fail to subscribe data for their updates. Few others become perpetual debtors to network service providers in their uncommon crave to borrow data for their daily updates. One thing stands out however in all these updates and that is this: unlike the diary, which is the original layout, thought, and inspired motivation of the diarist, many WhatsApp status updates with few exceptions were not usually the original thoughts of the owners. While some are culled from other social media platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, other people's WhatsApp status updates, etc. others are scanned from print media including excerpts from the Bible or Quran depending on the moving force behind the interest within that 24 hours seduction and attraction.

Reasons for Status Updates and Followership

Here, the reasons for the giver and taker are juxtaposed as they appear both similar and opposite. Indeed, the relationship between those who update and those who follow/view such updates can best be described as symbiotic. They are all in the business of killing boredom and catching cruise/groove as they refer to fun seeking these days. The general reasons for update cut across human interest areas of politics, information, socio-economic, religious/spiritual, entertainment/fun seeking, celebrations, advertisement/publicity, settling scores, mischief making, scamming, among other reasons to which the human mind is prone. But to be more specific, the findings below reveal some of the reasons for WhatsApp status updates from our respondents which are hereby discussed.

- i. **Catching cruise/groove:** This is one of the major reasons for update. It is more common with undergraduates. Here, they post and repost all sorts of information including pornography. It is instructive that many in this category do not understand the implications of the things they post beyond having fun. For them, it is cruise to post links requesting viewers to write anything about them with assurance of anonymity. Some, aware of the moral undertones of their updates, block their parents and those who may object from accessing their status updates.
- ii. **Felicitations/wishes:** Wishing friends, family members, colleagues and others well and congratulating them on achieving a certain feat. The most common of these is birthday wishes. Friends, family members, colleagues are wished a wonderful birthday celebration with a generous splash of pictures and videos; a preoccupation which engages the attention of update freaks. For some of them, no day passes without such wishes. It is said that life and death are necessary in life. So, the updates contain obituary announcements of loved ones with details of burial information and splashes of emotions depending on the relationship. Memorials follow it and

anniversaries of all manners as only Nigerians know how. Information on the activities of Yahoo boys and their atrocities also come into this category.

- iii. **Politics:** For the politically motivated in the phone contacts, their updates also reflect news of political happenings in the country. They follow whatever the President is doing or not doing and enjoy posting cartoons and related information about government officials and their antics. For instance, the Vice President, Professor Yemi Osibanjo, caught in a picture while going about with a power bank to ensure that his phone battery continued to function has been attributed to why Nigerians would never settle down to solve their electricity problem.
- iv. **Religion:** This accounts for a large chunk of the updates. Again, it is dependent on the religious inclinations of those on the phonebook. One encounters such updates which admonish viewers to be morally upright and some simply advise themselves to change. "I am an ambassador of Christ; I'm called to reign and rule in the Name of Jesus. I am the bearer and conveyor of divine verities. Through me, the light of the glorious Gospel is made manifest. I exude ever-increasing glory, ever-increasing success, ever-increasing victory and prosperity, and ever-increasing health. I am for signs and wonders. Praise God! I'm alive!" This type of update is both personal and an admonition for those in the contact who view the updates. Sometimes the updates display the religious antics of some pastors in their real or imagined healing miracles. Religious updates help assuage the spiritual yearnings of those concerned.
- v. **Advertisements and marketing information:** Many of the WhatsApp status updates carry publicity, advertisement, and marketing information for the informed use of viewers. The products cover every conceivable item of human need including private organ enlargement and body maintenance; health concerns as BSE- Breast Self Examination, with illustrations, among others. One such update reads, "Yes, I can brag about the effectiveness of the product I am using, I can decide to eat up to 50 times a day but it won't show much on me." Sometimes, health freaks post various types of exercises; indeed, the posts are as the spirit leads.
- vi. **Achievements:** People in this category use their updates to showcase their achievements and bemoan their losses and challenges. The updates here usually announce purchase of new cars, iPhones, new houses, awards of various kinds, publications, matriculation and convocation ceremonies, etc. On the other hand, they also grieve over the things they have lost to miscreants, thieves, scammers, or carelessness. For example, "Okay, so, my phone got stolen few weeks ago. Lost a lot of contacts, thanks to e-mail, (I was able to restore some). I didn't really care about my birthday 'cause I was not happy! Like how am I going to celebrate my birthday without a phone! I later got another phone but I was still sad."
- vii. **Sports:** Here sports buffs inundate viewers with sports news and information from football, boxing, wrestling, basketball, and numerous other sporting events. The unpatriotic nature of the Nigerian youths (mostly) is reflected in the area of sports as they shamelessly celebrate Western Football Clubs- Chelsea, Arsenal, Manchester City, Manchester United (Man-U), Liverpool, among others while not giving a hoot about local club sides.
- viii. **Entertainment:** This relates with caching fun/cruise. The updates here cover just about anything from inanities to serious issues of concern. These are usually in the form of images, videos or graphics, culled from other social media platforms with the person posting running comments in the form of footnotes. Also, mischief makers play pranks and those who are quarrelling use the updates to exchange abuses and trade insults with each other. Sometimes, the unwary get scammed from posts calling for all sorts of services online.

The findings are not exhaustive. Within the three-month duration of the research, it was extremely difficult to experience a dull moment. Some people practically live in the social media. One particular retiree was, almost, always online and bombarding viewers with pictures of children, grandchildren and

anything that caught their fancy. One latent discovery was that social media help people to remain relevant, fill time, and engage themselves ‘meaningfully’ in the act of killing boredom. For such users, it has become a habit rather than an addiction. For some, the frequency of updates is dependent on regularity of subscription to data. It was equally discovered that status updates have no relationship with keeping diary. It is just a convenient way of getting oneself busy and getting entertained and informed at the same time. Given some of the inanities that engage people’s attention, it is a wonder how such people would have coped in the absence of these social media platforms.

Conclusion

There is little doubt that the technological innovations of every era serve the objectives and needs of such era until something new comes to either, complement or displace it. For instance, analogue telephony was the rage in the 19th century until the evolution of the internet with its digital and mobile telecommunication and their paraphernalia of social media platforms. The art of keeping a diary, though personal, like the art of writing, has suffered more than other genres of literature from the innovative and versatility of social media especially WhatsApp, which serves multifarious purposes for its users. Though other social media outlets such as Facebook, Twitter, Yahoo messenger, etc. could serve similar purposes, WhatsApp was chosen for its status application, which gives users the opportunity to compete with time in keeping records of their daily activities. This paper has examined the displacement role and functions of WhatsApp Status updates against the relevance of the diary as a medium of communication. It was discovered that WhatsApp status updates neither displaced nor substituted for diary. But the updates serve various purposes one of which is likened to keeping diaries. Just as the diary helped the keeper in recording their personal challenges and achievements even so do WhatsApp Status updates. It is therefore unlikely that those who have access to such updates would bother to keep diaries.

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