

SOCIAL MEDIA AND POSTMODERNIST CULTURE AMONG UNDERGRADUATES OF NASARAWA STATE UNIVERSITY, KEFFI

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Abstract

This study examined the role of social media in promoting postmodernist culture among undergraduate students of Nasarawa State University, Keffi. Specifically, it investigated students' exposure to postmodernist content, the dominant themes conveyed through social media, the influence of digital platforms on postmodernist ideas, and the platforms most frequently used by undergraduates. A mixed-method research design was adopted. Data were collected through questionnaires administered to 200 students, with 193 valid responses retrieved, representing a 96.5% response rate. Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) complemented the survey data. Quantitative data were analysed using frequencies and percentages, while qualitative data were analysed thematically. The findings revealed high exposure to social media, with TikTok, Instagram, Facebook, WhatsApp and X serving as the major platforms. Entertainment, fashion, memes, lifestyle content and identity expression emerged as dominant themes. The study concludes that social media promotes postmodernist culture among undergraduates and recommends digital media literacy and responsible social media use.

Keywords: Social media, postmodernism, postmodernist culture, undergraduates, Nasarawa State University.

Introduction

The rapid advancement of digital communication technologies has transformed the way people communicate, access information, and express themselves. Unlike traditional media, where communication largely followed a one-way pattern from the sender to the audience, social media has introduced an interactive communication environment that enables users to create, share, and exchange content in real time. This transformation has significantly influenced social relationships, cultural practices, and identity formation, particularly among young people and university students (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). In Nigeria, undergraduate students constitute one of the most active groups of social media users. Platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, WhatsApp, and X (formerly Twitter) have become integral to their daily lives, serving purposes beyond communication, including entertainment, learning, business promotion, networking, and self-expression. Through these platforms, students interact with diverse ideas, cultures, and lifestyles that influence their perceptions, values, and identities (Boyd, 2014; Appel et al., 2020). The

widespread use of social media has also facilitated the spread of postmodernist ideas. Postmodernism questions universal truths, fixed identities, and traditional systems of authority while emphasising diversity, creativity, plurality, and multiple interpretations of reality (Lyotard, 1984; Baudrillard, 1994). These characteristics are evident on social media, where users construct online identities, engage in digital trends, participate in cultural exchanges, and freely express opinions on social, political, and cultural issues.

Recent digital developments in Nigeria further illustrate the relationship between social media and postmodernist culture. Online movements such as #EndSARS, the rise of the Alté subculture, influencer culture, and discussions surrounding personalities such as VeryDarkMan demonstrate how digital platforms have become spaces for cultural expression, identity construction, public participation, and the contestation of dominant narratives. Although previous studies have examined social media in relation to communication, political participation, education, and entertainment, comparatively little attention has been given to its role in promoting postmodernist culture among undergraduate students in Nigeria. Existing studies have paid limited attention to issues such as identity fluidity, cultural hybridity, creative self-expression, and the questioning of traditional beliefs within university environments. This gap is particularly evident among undergraduate students in North-Central Nigeria. Against this background, this study examined the role of social media in promoting postmodernist culture among undergraduate students of Nasarawa State University, Keffi. Specifically, it investigated students' exposure to postmodernist content, identified the dominant postmodern themes conveyed through social media, examined how social media promotes postmodernist ideas, and identified the platforms most frequently used by undergraduates.

Research Questions

The study sought to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the extent of undergraduates' exposure to postmodernist content on social media?
2. What are the dominant postmodern themes conveyed through social media among undergraduates?
3. How does social media promote postmodernist ideas among undergraduates?
4. Which social media platforms are most frequently used in promoting postmodernist culture among undergraduates?

Conceptual and Literature Review

Social Media

Social media refers to internet-based platforms that enable users to create, share, exchange, and interact with user-generated content in real time. Unlike traditional media, which largely follows a one-way communication model, social media encourages participation, collaboration, and instant feedback, allowing users to function as both producers and consumers of information. Boyd and Ellison (2007) describe social media as web-based services that enable individuals to create public or semi-public profiles, connect with others, and navigate their social networks. Similarly, Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) define social media as internet-based applications built on the foundations of Web 2.0 that facilitate the creation and exchange of user-generated content. These definitions highlight the interactive and participatory nature of social media. Livingstone (2008) notes that social media provides opportunities for communication, identity exploration, and self-expression, while McQuail (2010) argues that it has transformed communication through two-way interaction and greater audience participation. In Nigeria, platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, WhatsApp, and X (formerly Twitter) have become integral to the academic, social, and recreational lives of university students. Appel et al. (2020) and Alalwan et al. (2022) further

observe that social media has transformed users from passive recipients of information into active creators and distributors of digital content.

Postmodernism

Postmodernism is a philosophical and cultural perspective that challenges absolute truth, fixed identities, and universal explanations of reality. It argues that reality is socially constructed and that meaning varies across individuals and cultures. Lyotard (1984) describes postmodernism as an "incredulity towards metanarratives," emphasising scepticism towards universal claims to truth. Baudrillard (1994) explains that media representations often become more influential than reality itself, creating what he describes as hyperreality. Jameson (1991) further identifies fragmentation, cultural hybridity, and the mixing of cultural forms as key characteristics of postmodern culture, while Bauman (2000) argues that identity has become increasingly fluid in contemporary society. These perspectives help explain how digital communication influences identity construction, cultural expression, and social interaction among university students.

Social Media and Postmodernist Culture

Social media has become an important platform through which postmodernist culture is created and expressed. Its interactive nature enables users to produce content, construct identities, and participate in public discourse, reinforcing postmodern characteristics such as identity fluidity, creativity, cultural hybridity, and multiple interpretations of reality. Digital platforms expose users to diverse cultures, lifestyles, languages, fashion, music, and beliefs, encouraging the blending of local and global influences. They also promote creativity through memes, short videos, digital storytelling, humour, and satire, allowing users to communicate ideas in ways that challenge conventional forms of expression. The growth of influencer culture and digital activism further illustrates the relationship between social media and postmodernism. Campaigns such as #EndSARS and the influence of content creators on TikTok, Instagram, and Facebook demonstrate how ordinary users increasingly shape public discourse through user-generated content. Among undergraduate students, these interactions encourage self-expression, cultural diversity, and identity negotiation, reinforcing the role of social media in promoting postmodernist culture.

Empirical Review

Exposure to Postmodern Content on Social Media

Empirical studies show that young people are increasingly exposed to social media content that shapes their identities, values, and social interactions. Livingstone (2008) found that social networking platforms encourage communication, identity exploration, and self-expression, while Boyd (2014) observed that users actively construct and manage online identities, reflecting the postmodern view of identity as fluid and performative. In Nigeria, Adamu (2016) reported that university students frequently use Facebook and Instagram to engage with diverse cultural influences, and Appel et al. (2020) found that social media has transformed users from passive consumers into active creators of digital content. Although these studies demonstrate the influence of social media on identity and cultural expression, they provide limited evidence on how exposure to social media specifically promotes postmodern culture among undergraduate students in North-Central Nigeria. This study addresses that gap using evidence from Nasarawa State University, Keffi.

Dominant Postmodern Themes Conveyed Through Social Media

Studies have shown that social media promotes communication patterns associated with postmodern culture, including identity experimentation, cultural hybridity, humour, parody, and creative self-expression. Jameson (1991) identifies fragmentation and the blending of cultural forms as key characteristics of contemporary digital culture. Similarly, Musa and Gambo (2022)

found that university students frequently use memes, humour, and satire to discuss political and social issues, while Adamu, Musa and Gambo (2023) reported that students increasingly combine indigenous cultural practices with global digital trends through platforms such as Instagram and TikTok. Despite these findings, there is limited empirical evidence on the dominant postmodern themes encountered by undergraduates in North-Central Nigeria. This study therefore examines these themes among students of Nasarawa State University, Keffi.

Influence of Social Media in Promoting Postmodern Ideas Among Undergraduates

Several studies have established that social media influences identity, culture, and social participation. Turkle (2011) argues that digital technologies enable individuals to present multiple online identities, while Appel et al. (2020) found that social media promotes active participation and collaborative content creation. In Nigeria, Eze and Olaniyan (2020) reported that social media enables young people to challenge dominant narratives and participate in civic engagement, while GeoPoll (2023) observed that Nigerian youths spend significant time on social media for entertainment, interaction, and content creation. However, these studies do not specifically explain how social media promotes postmodern ideas among undergraduate students in North-Central Nigeria. This study fills that gap by examining the influence of social media on postmodern ideas among students of Nasarawa State University, Keffi.

Social Media Platforms Commonly Used in Promoting Postmodern Culture Among Undergraduates

Studies consistently identify Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, WhatsApp, and X as the social media platforms most frequently used by young people. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) note that these platforms encourage interaction and user-generated content, while Auxier and Anderson (2021) found that Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook are particularly popular for creativity and identity expression. Similarly, GeoPoll (2023) reported that Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, WhatsApp, and X dominate social media use among Nigerian youths, whereas Bibian and Ma'rof (2024) observed that Instagram and TikTok support identity exploration and creative expression. Although these studies identify widely used platforms, they provide limited evidence on their specific role in promoting postmodern culture among undergraduate students. This study addresses that gap by identifying the platforms most frequently used by students of Nasarawa State University, Keffi and examining their contribution to the promotion of postmodern culture.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on Postmodern Theory, which provides an appropriate framework for understanding how social media influences identity construction, cultural expression, and social interaction among undergraduate students. The theory challenges the modernist assumption that truth, knowledge, and identity are fixed and universal, arguing instead that reality is socially constructed and meaning is continuously negotiated through communication and interaction. Lyotard (1984) argues that contemporary society is characterised by an "incredulity towards metanarratives," suggesting that individuals no longer depend solely on traditional institutions such as religion, family, or the state for knowledge and meaning. Baudrillard (1994) further explains that media representations can become more influential than reality itself, a condition he describes as hyperreality. Jameson (1991) also identifies fragmentation, cultural hybridity, and the blending of cultural forms as key features of postmodern culture. These perspectives explain how social media enables undergraduates to construct multiple identities, engage with diverse cultures, and participate in the creation and circulation of postmodern ideas. Postmodern Theory therefore

provides an appropriate lens for examining the role of social media in promoting postmodern culture among undergraduate students of Nasarawa State University, Keffi.

Methodology

This study adopted a mixed-method research design involving a questionnaire survey and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) to obtain quantitative and qualitative data. The study was conducted among undergraduate students of Nasarawa State University, Keffi, Nasarawa State, Nigeria. The target population comprised approximately 20,000 undergraduate students enrolled in the 2024/2025 academic session. Using Cochran's (1977) sample size determination formula, 200 respondents were selected. Of the questionnaires administered, 193 were successfully completed and retrieved, representing a 96.5% response rate. A multi-stage sampling technique was employed. Three faculties Media and Communication Studies, Arts, and Social Sciences were purposively selected, after which respondents were chosen through simple random sampling from students who actively used Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, WhatsApp, and X. In addition, 10 undergraduate students participated in Focus Group Discussions to provide deeper insights into their experiences. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire and a Focus Group Discussion guide developed in line with the study objectives. The questionnaire covered respondents' demographic characteristics, exposure to postmodern content, dominant postmodern themes, the influence of social media on postmodern ideas, and the social media platforms most frequently used by undergraduates. The instruments were validated through expert review and a pilot study. Quantitative data were analysed using frequencies and percentages, while qualitative data from the Focus Group Discussions were analysed thematically. Findings from both methods were integrated to provide a comprehensive understanding of how social media promotes postmodern culture among undergraduate students of Nasarawa State University, Keffi.

Data Collection and Presentation

A total of 200 questionnaires were administered to undergraduate students of Nasarawa State University, Keffi, of which 193 were successfully retrieved, representing a 96.5% response rate. The retrieved questionnaires were analysed using frequencies and percentages, while findings from the Focus Group Discussions were integrated into the discussion to complement and enrich the quantitative results.

Table 2: Extent of Undergraduates' Exposure to Postmodernist Content on Social Media (n = 193)

Questionnaire Item	Response	Total	Percentage
How often do you use social media?	Very Often	56	29
	Often	50	25.9
	Sometimes	45	23.3
	Rarely	35	18.1
	Never	9	4.7
	Total	193	100
How many hours do you spend daily on social media?	Less Than 1 Hr	18	9.3
	1-2 Hrs	35	18.1
	3-4 Hrs	41	21.2
	5-6 Hrs	50	25.9
	More Than 6 Hrs	53	27.5
	Total	193	100

How often do you participate in discussions on social media?	Very Often	65	33.7
	Often	66	34.2
	Sometimes	44	22.8
	Rarely	21	10.9
	Never	11	5.7
	Total	193	100

Source: Field Survey, 2026.

Table 2 shows that respondents are highly active on social media. About 29.0% use social media very often, while 25.9% use it often. Similarly, 27.5% spend more than six hours daily online, followed by 25.9% who spend between five and six hours. In addition, 34.2% often participate in social media discussions, while 33.7% do so very often. These findings indicate a high level of social media engagement among undergraduates, increasing their exposure to digital content and postmodernist ideas.

Table 3: Dominant Postmodern Themes Conveyed Through Social Media (n = 193)

Questionnaire Item	Response	Total	Percentage
Primary purpose for using social media	Academic activities	35	18.1
	Entertainment	65	33.7
	Social interaction	51	26.4
	Self-expression	23	11.9
	Information sharing	19	9.9
	Total	193	100
Social media enables me to express multiple aspects of my identity	Strongly Agree	70	36.3
	Agree	41	21.2
	Neutral	40	20.7
	Disagree	27	14
	Strongly Disagree	19	9.8
	Total	193	100
Exposure to social media content makes me question traditional norms and values	Strongly Agree	61	31.6
	Agree	50	25.9
	Neutral	45	23.3
	Disagree	21	10.9
	Strongly Disagree	16	8.3
	Total	193	100
I prefer visual and multimedia content to text-based content	Strongly Agree	80	41.5
	Agree	50	25.9
	Neutral	47	5.2
	Disagree	10	21
	Strongly Disagree	10	5.2
	Total	193	100

Source: Field Survey, 2026.

The findings in Table 3 show that entertainment is the primary reason respondents use social media (33.7%), followed by social interaction (26.4%) and academic activities (18.1%). In addition, 36.3% strongly agreed that social media enables them to express different aspects of their identity,

while 41.5% strongly preferred visual and multimedia content to text-based information. The results also indicate that exposure to social media encourages many respondents to question traditional norms and values. Overall, the findings suggest that social media serves as a platform for entertainment, identity expression, and exposure to diverse perspectives among undergraduates.

Table 4: Influence of Social Media in Promoting Postmodernist Ideas Among Undergraduates (n = 193)

Questionnaire Item	Response	Total	Percentage
Social media has influenced the way I think about culture and identity	Strongly Agree	50	25.9
	Agree	56	29
	Neutral	40	20
	Disagree	30	15.5
	Strongly Disagree	18	9.3
	Total	193	100
Social media encourages creative freedom and non-traditional thinking	Strongly Agree	50	25.9
	Agree	80	41.5
	Neutral	47	24.4
	Disagree	10	5.2
	Strongly Disagree	10	5.2
	Total	193	100
Social media allows individuals to challenge dominant narratives	Strongly Agree	80	41.5
	Agree	50	25.9
	Neutral	47	24.4
	Disagree	10	5.2
	Strongly Disagree	10	5.2
	Total	193	100
My educational perspectives have been shaped by content encountered on social media	Strongly Agree	50	25.9
	Agree	61	31.6
	Neutral	45	23.3
	Disagree	25	13
	Strongly Disagree	16	8.3
	Total	193	100
Social media supports independent thinking among undergraduates	Strongly Agree	70	36.3
	Agree	40	20.7
	Neutral	41	21.2
	Disagree	27	14
	Strongly Disagree	19	9.8
	Total	193	100

Source: Field Survey, 2026.

Table 4 reveals that social media significantly influences the thoughts and perspectives of undergraduate students. More than half of the respondents (54.9%) agreed that it has shaped their

views on culture and identity, while 67.4% agreed that it promotes creative freedom, non-traditional thinking, and the questioning of dominant narratives. The findings also show that many respondents believed social media had influenced their educational perspectives and encouraged independent thinking. Overall, the results indicate that social media promotes postmodernist ideas by fostering creativity, critical thinking, and diverse viewpoints.

Table 5: Social Media Platforms Commonly Used by Undergraduates (n = 193)

Platform	Response	Total	Percentage
Facebook	Very Often	56	29
	Often	49	25.4
	Sometimes	35	18.1
	Rarely	35	18.1
	Never	18	9.3
	Total	193	100
Instagram	Very Often	70	36.3
	Often	41	21.2
	Sometimes	40	20.7
	Rarely	27	14
	Never	19	9.8
	Total	193	100
X (Twitter)	Very Often	45	23.3
	Often	41	21.2
	Sometimes	50	25.9
	Rarely	21	10.9
	Never	20	10.4
	Total	193	100
WhatsApp	Very Often	48	24.9
	Often	50	25.9
	Sometimes	40	20.7
	Rarely	37	19.2
	Never	22	11.4
	Total	193	100
TikTok	Very Often	71	36.8
	Often	54	28
	Sometimes	43	22.3
	Rarely	13	6.7
	Never	16	8.3
	Total	193	100

Source: Field Survey, 2026.

The findings in Table 5 show that TikTok is the most frequently used social media platform among respondents (36.8%), followed by Instagram (36.3%) and Facebook (29.0%). WhatsApp also recorded considerable usage, while X (formerly Twitter) was used less frequently, with most respondents indicating they use it only sometimes. These findings suggest that undergraduates prefer visually engaging and interactive platforms that support short-form videos, creativity, entertainment, and lifestyle content, making TikTok and Instagram key channels for the dissemination of postmodernist ideas and digital culture.

Discussion of Findings

The discussion is organised according to the four objectives of the study and integrates findings from the questionnaire survey and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). **Extent of Undergraduates' Exposure to Postmodern Content on Social Media** .The findings show that undergraduate students of Nasarawa State University, Keffi are highly exposed to postmodern content through their frequent use of social media. Most respondents reported using social media regularly, spending several hours daily online and actively participating in discussions, indicating that they are both consumers and creators of digital content. FGD participants confirmed that while WhatsApp is mainly used for private communication, TikTok and Instagram expose them to diverse ideas, lifestyles, fashion trends, and cultural practices through personalised content recommendations. These findings support Baudrillard's (1994) concept of hyperreality, which explains how media representations shape perceptions of reality. They are also consistent with Livingstone (2008) and Appel et al. (2020), who argue that social media promotes interaction, identity exploration, and active participation in digital culture.

Dominant Postmodern Themes Conveyed Through Social Media

The study revealed that entertainment, visual content, self-expression, and exposure to diverse perspectives are the dominant themes of social media use among undergraduates. Many respondents indicated that social media enables them to express different aspects of their identity and question traditional beliefs. FGD participants identified memes, humorous videos, fashion, lifestyle content, and short-form videos as the most common content encountered on TikTok and Instagram. These findings reflect Jameson's (1991) view of postmodern culture as characterised by fragmentation, cultural hybridity, and visual symbolism. They also support Jenkins' (2006) concept of participatory culture, which emphasises users' active role in creating and sharing digital content.

Influence of Social Media in Promoting Postmodern Ideas Among Undergraduates

The findings indicate that social media significantly influences students' views on culture, identity, and social reality. Respondents agreed that social media encourages creativity, independent thinking, and the questioning of dominant narratives. FGD participants explained that digital platforms provide opportunities to express opinions freely and engage with diverse perspectives on social, academic, and political issues. These findings support Lyotard's (1984) argument that postmodern society is characterised by scepticism towards grand narratives and Turkle's (2011) view that digital technologies have transformed identity construction and self-expression. **Social Media Platforms Commonly Used in Promoting Postmodern Culture** The study found that TikTok, Instagram, Facebook, WhatsApp, and X are the major social media platforms used by undergraduate students, with TikTok and Instagram emerging as the most influential. FGD participants attributed the popularity of these platforms to their emphasis on visual communication, personalised content, creativity, and self-expression. The findings agree with Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), who argue that social media platforms differ in their communication features, and Auxier and Anderson (2021), who identify Instagram and TikTok as leading platforms for creativity and interactive communication among young people.

Conclusion

This study examined the role of social media in promoting postmodernist culture among undergraduate students of Nasarawa State University, Keffi. The findings revealed that social media is an integral part of students' lives, exposing them to diverse ideas, cultures, and forms of expression that influence their identities, values, and social interactions. Entertainment, visual content, self-expression, and diverse viewpoints emerged as the dominant themes of social media

use, while TikTok and Instagram were identified as the most influential platforms because of their emphasis on visual storytelling, creativity, and user-generated content. Overall, the study concludes that social media serves as an important medium through which postmodernist culture is created, shared, and reinforced among undergraduate students.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the study recommends that:

1. Universities should strengthen digital and media literacy programmes to enable students to critically evaluate social media content and use digital platforms responsibly.
2. Lecturers should integrate appropriate social media platforms into teaching and learning to enhance academic engagement and knowledge sharing.
3. Students should maintain a healthy balance between academic and recreational use of social media to maximise its educational benefits.
4. Content creators and digital influencers should promote responsible, culturally sensitive, and educational content that encourages creativity, critical thinking, and positive social values.
5. Future studies should examine the influence of emerging social media platforms on postmodern culture among students in other higher institutions across Nigeria.

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