Original Research

Social Media Skits: Reshaping the Entertainment Experience of Broadcast Audience

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Abstract
The emergence of social media has produced diverse changes for broadcast media in the discharge of their entertainment function. While the uses and gratification theory identifies entertainment as one of the needs that motivate the audience to use the media, the technological determinism theory argues that the nature and strength of interaction in the society change as new media technologies evolve. This study is a descriptive and predictive discourse on how social media skits are reshaping audience consumption, participation, expectation, and production of entertainment. As opposed to broadcast experience, the audience engage with social media skits, own them, many times produce them, form relationships around them, demand for new contents, and through their reactions, affect the sustainability of the content providers online. They also redefine entertainment for comedians who release skits to test new comedy materials. These interacting features together reshape the way the audience experience entertainment on social media.

Keywords
skits, social media, broadcast audience, entertainment, parasocial relationships, audience experience

Introduction
It is common in mass communication studies to identify the major functions of the mass media as information, education, and entertainment, though there are other functions being performed (Baran & Davis, 2010; Obe, 2008). Among these three popularly referenced functions, the audience often have preference for entertainment, which is an important part of how the audience spend their leisure time (Bartsch, 2012; Eastman & Ferguson, 2013; Tan, 2017). The broadcast media gratify the entertainment needs of the audience by providing relaxation and escape from reality through general programming or by dedicating certain programs to entertainment. Such forms of entertainment could include films, soap operas, comedy shows, sport, talk shows, dramas, documentaries, animation, music, and skits.

With the growth of social media, supplementary or alternative means of fulfilling entertainment gratification are now available to the audience. The assertion of Brown (2017) is that the audience have found greater advantage of the use of social media for entertainment purposes rather than just for information sharing and communication. One of the forms of entertainment that has transcended the broadcast media into the social media is skit—short comedy sketch—that is often delivered in video formats. Through the peculiarities of the social media, the audience are now opened to a range of skits which provide entertainment that are beyond the physical

boarders, mobile, and available at the time they decide to view them. Anecdotal data have also revealed instances of replication of skits, engaging social community who use and redefine entertainment, parasocial interaction, and receiving incentives for participation. Hence, this seemingly increases acceptability and participation as the audience become active and co-creators of entertainment contents (Cunningham & Craig, 2016; Dunu & Uzochukwu, 2015).

Thus, social media skits could be said to be giving the audience a different feel of entertainment experience as opposed to that of the broadcast media. While one of the primary purposes of broadcast media is to provide entertainment, the introduction of social media arguably reshapes what entertainment is, where and how the audience get it, participation, and the overall user experience. Therefore, the goal of this study is to examine this evolving trend and its implications on the entertainment experience of the audience.

In line with this, and specifically because of the evolving nature of social media entertainment, we aim to discuss how

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skit generation and audience engagement through social media networks are reshaping media content consumption and experience. The study adopts the form of a conceptual paper which presents a review of literature focused on the consumption of multimedia content for entertainment gratification to examine the changes in audience experience in the wake of social media as against traditional broadcasting. This study considers the role of comedy in entertainment, strategies adopted by content creators, and the theoretical backing for the current trends in broadcast and social media consumption. We explore the uses and gratification and technological determinism theories to provide theoretical and practical justifications about the realities of social media entertainment experience among the audience. Based on these, we outline our idea of social media entertainments with a specific focus on skits among Nigerian and other African content creators and how this affects the audience entertainment experience. Our arguments are presented in this order: First, we briefly establish a conceptual clarification for entertainment, discussing basic assumptions and its role as a function of the mass media and a program type. We then discuss the role of comedy as entertainment in the mass media. Under the theoretical perspective, we explore how the social media entertainment experience through skits might align or does align with existing theories about audiences for entertainment. Fourth, we present our observation of trends and content creators in the world of social media skit entertainment backed up by some reference to textual and scientific scholarship. Fifth, we situate audience entertainment experience within the context of social media skits by emphasizing seven perspectives: global availability of skits; community building; real-time communication and feedback; parasocial interactions and relationships; audience participation and entertainment cocreation experience; audience redefining entertainment content for creators; and mainstreaming of advertising and development communication in entertainment. Sixth, we present our discussion and suggestions. Seventh, we discuss the limitations of the study and suggestion for further research. Afterward, we present an open research issues section. Finally, we present our conclusions.

**Entertainment: Meaning and Clarification**

Studies have shown that the mass media deliver entertainment to the audience and the audience use the mass media for entertainment purposes (Baran & Davis, 2010; Obe, 2008). It is therefore important to understand the concept of entertainment. Entertainment, according to Baran and Davis (2010) is the “media’s ability to amuse” the audience (p. 248). It brings about relaxation and ease of tension and stress among the audience, and elicits the emotions of excitement, enjoyment, interest, and absorption, which incite them to wanting more of such program from the mass media. Entertainment therefore serves as a strategy of attracting, sustaining, and increasing the number of audience members to improve the commercial viability of the mass media (Baran & Davis, 2010; Tan, 2017).

In the words of Bartsch (2017), entertainment can be “characterised as an intrinsically gratifying form of media use that is enjoyed or appreciated by audience for the sake of the media itself” (p. 1). The latter part of Bartsch’s definition stresses that the media through which the audience enjoy entertainment are important. This makes Marshall McLuhan’s famous assertion “the medium is the message” remain relevant. Entertainment avails the audience intrinsic satisfaction and benefits that Bartsch (2017) has identified to include mood management, meaning making, attention absorption, character affiliation, and self-affirmation. Earlier researchers, Oliver and Raney (2011), argue that beyond amusing the audience, entertainment can motivate them to develop eudaimonic concerns of “grappling with questions such as life’s purpose and human meaningfulness” (p. 984). The authors illustrate that though a media program might be entertaining, one with sad stories might cause the viewer to seek for truth and insight, their purposes in life, as well as good portrayals of human condition. This highlights the ability of entertainment to bring the audience to a place of introspect. Entertainment, however, is not void of criticisms and negative effects on the audience, which are usually unintended. These include “stimulation of aggressive thoughts, feelings, and behaviours or biased perceptions of reality” (Bartsch, 2017, p. 1). Critics, however, contend that these effects cannot entirely be alluded to the medium as environmental factors such as social norms, friends, associates, and weather and personal factors such as individual reasoning, skills, and self-efficacy can serve as either barriers or facilitators (Bandura, 2012; Baran & Davis, 2010; C. Li, 2018).

In recent years, entertainment has been identified to go beyond attracting and sustaining audience attention, and the persuasiveness and emotional involvement of entertainment have led to the insertion of prosocial messages with the overall aim of changing overt behaviors. Evidence of adoption of health behaviors, brand support, political involvement among the citizens, and acceptance of many more prosocial messages embedded in entertainment have been recorded, hence causing a rise in the use of entertainment for communicating prosocial messages, a media strategy which is known as entertainment-education (Akinwande & Oketunmbi, 2013; Knobloch-Westerwick & Lavis, 2017; Murphy et al., 2011; Sheth & Kim, 2017).

Eastman and Ferguson (2013) argue that of all media programs, entertainment appeals most to the audience whether as viewers, listeners, or online users. This the media achieve through various formats, such as movies, games, soap operas, sport, talk shows, drama, animations, art, music, dances, fashion, show biz, documentaries, adverts, comedy shows, and skits (Eastman & Ferguson, 2013; Hustead, 2012; Tan,
Comedy as Entertainment in the Mass Media

The mass media gratify the audience with entertainment through comedy. The aim of a comedy program is to get the audience to laugh and get entertained by presenting humorous narratives, characters, and situations. Other objectives could include serving as a platform for mirroring the society, creating awareness and providing solutions to societal issues, persuading the audience, simplifying social and civic issues to encourage participation in the society, encouraging the creative arts, as well as discovering and promoting talents (Chattoo, 2017).

The humorous situations are presented by a narrator or through a group of actors in the form of drama or skit. Eastman and Ferguson (2013) note that “engaging dialogue, attractive characters, romantic themes, nostalgia, suspense and high emotion” (p. 12) are features embedded in comedy that stimulate entertainment among the audience. While deriving pleasure in entertainment, the audience, just like in other types of media program, seek for new ideas or at least a twist to old narratives as they are intolerant to stale or familiar contents (Bartsch, 2017; Eastman & Ferguson, 2013; Sturges, 2015).

The need for the use of comedy in delivering entertainment to the audience has increased due to the popular notions among media producers that the audience, especially youths, get bored easily, have a low attention span, and have access to alternative sources of entertainment (Eastman & Ferguson, 2013). Could the other sources of entertainment include social media, especially as social media usage is popular among youths? (Han, 2008; Musa, 2015; Neves et al., 2018).

This could be as Baran and Davis (2010) assert that the “new media have greatly expanded our options for entertainment” (p. 23). Instead of waiting for scheduled comedy movies to be broadcast on television, the audience now has access to many over the new media with reviews available as well. Entertainment contents are available in digital file formats that can be downloaded and shared. Smart devices aided by the internet have made it possible for audience in remote locations to access comedy entertainment around the world. An array of comedy entertainment contents from the broadcast media are also available on the social media, and when the audience are not interested in such, they become content generators and/or enjoy those uploaded by fellow content producers on their social networks.

Theoretical Perspectives to Audience Use of the Media for Entertainment

In 1974, Elihu Katz, Jay Blumler, and Michael Gurevitch developed the uses and gratification theory to better study how and why audience members use the media for personal satisfaction. The central idea of this theory is that audience members are active in their use of the media, which they expose themselves to, based on different individual personal needs or wants. Papacharissi (2009) referred to these needs as being “connected to the social and psychological makeup of the individual” (p. 137). The needs in turn thereby affect what the audience members look out for in the media, what motivates them to access the media, and the relevance they place on the media contents and outfit. DeFleur and DeFleur (2016) identify the core assumptions of uses and gratification theory as “an active audience (2) goal directed”—that is, its members seek, select, and attend to media content that (3) provides some sort of satisfaction for needs or that provides some other types of gratification” (p. 189). Oh et al. (2017) note that uses and gratification places active audience in a position to select media products to satisfy a range of “information, personal identity, integration and social interaction, and entertainment needs” (p. 28). Entertainment, they observed, tops the chart of audience needs as it involves them “escaping from challenges, gaining intrinsic cultural and aesthetic enjoyment, and seeking emotional release” (Oh et al., 2017, p. 28).

As both broadcast media and social media skits provide entertainment, the uses and gratification theory suggests that the audience will use the medium that satisfies their personal needs. The audience further chooses and exposes themselves to the medium that best satisfies their entertainment needs. The active, goal-oriented audience and their need for satisfaction show their functionality in creating importance and demand for the production effort of media entertainment. The realities of increased audience want and use of social media for entertainment gratification have led to assertions by various authors that social media are shifting from a communication channel to an entertainment channel (Brown, 2017; Bui, 2014). The entertainment satisfaction provided by social media skits can be responsible for audience acceptance and interaction with entertainment. The entertainment gratification is taken a step further as the audience share the humorous videos to interact with their online friends (Hustead, 2012). Study by Whiting and Williams (2013) also confirmed that through activities like reading comments and watching videos that are heavy on comic relief, the audience derive pleasure and use social media as an entertainment source, a source which (YouTube for instance) generates multiple similar entertainment videos based on the audience’s preferences.

Furthermore, the technological determinism theory holds that technology and its derivatives drive socio, economic, and cultural changes in every society. The introduction of a new technology, according to this theory, would lead to a change in the use of previous ones among the audience, transforming the society in many forms and affecting the way people learn, feel, think, and behave. Marshall McLuhan in 1962 added media technologies to the theory, which began
to reflect that the nature and strength of interaction in the society change as new media technologies evolve (Baran & Davis, 2010).

For the broadcast audience, the introduction of social media goes beyond an addition to the stable of mass communication channels. It opens up another platform for the entertainment function of the broadcast media to be delivered. Hence, the new technology has a deterministic influence on the society. It alters the way the audience learn, feel, think, perceive, and behave toward entertainment, and consequently, their entire lives and society. The audience begin to adapt to the new ways the social media deliver entertainment. This begins to define what entertainment is to them. Consequently, if the new technology being adapted to is accepted, the audience consciously and unconsciously begin to learn to use the new technology more for entertainment, whereas attention toward the old technology (broadcast media) will wane. While the audience begin to see entertainment in the new way it is being delivered via social media skits, advertisers, marketers, comedians, health communicators, and other stakeholders that use the mass media would begin to adopt this strategy to communicate to the audience. Therefore, the new technology not only brings about change directly to the audience; the entire society as postulated by the technological determinism theory experiences social change.

Social Media Skits: Trends and Merchants

In recent years, skits are becoming popular in entertainment. Specifically leveraging on the ability to share skits on the social media means that “a skit can be absorbed and deconstructed by thousands of people in a matter of minutes” (Awa-Kalu, 2016, para 3). This opens up the audience to unending availability of entertaining skits, which provide them with humor more constantly, as opposed to specifically waiting for comedy shows on the broadcast media which many times are not shareable.

The introduction of skits has brought about the start of many comedy careers stemming from skits that have gone viral among the audience on social media. The social media provide an array of platforms to showcase and promote such careers through this new way and format of presenting comedy. Skits on social media now boost talents in ways that were not available when the likes of Alibaba and Julius Agwu of Nigeria and Churchill of Kenya started as stand-up comedians in the 90s. Those who had gained fame before the popularity of the social media are also walking back to strengthen their base and acquire more followership by editing their old comedies or creating new ones. In this group, we have the likes of Mr. Bean, Jennifer Lewis, Shangela Wadley, and Anne Kansiime. Therefore, it is safe to state that entertainers are now leveraging upon social media skits, regardless of their entry point into comedy. Anne Kansiime’s hilarious online skits have won her several awards such as the YouTube silver play button 2015 and Comedy YouTube Sub-Sahara Africa Creator Awards 2016 (Kansiime, 2018, para 2), which both highlight the popularity and viewing rate of her skits.

Through people’s engagements with adverts, that is, the number of clicks and views, the number of adverts a user watched in a single viewing, and the amount of time spent in viewing the adverts, skit providers earn money on their social media platforms. The skit providers leverage on the number of subscribers and viewers who view adverts placed on their skits to facilitate their earnings. Therefore, advertisers look for trending skit providers who have high followership to place adverts on their channels. Although YouTube does not publish their payment rates, Olga Kay boasts of US$100,000 to US$130,000 gross earning annually from her comedy skit YouTube channel (Kaufman, 2014, para 13).

Some of the trending social media skit providers who found fame and started their career through this genre of entertainment include Mark Angel, Olga Kay, Ryan Abe, George Mnguni, Anthony Padilla and Ian Hecox of Smosh, Craze Clown, Jenna Mourey, Mo Gilligan, Arron Crascall, Twyse, and James Veitch. Many of them now have huge audience followership who seek after them for entertainment. This has also paved way for them in taking up similar roles in movies, music videos, as compères and brand ambassadors, YouTube doyenne, radio and television talk show hosts, as guests in the broadcast media, and as stand-up comedians.

The act of featuring celebrities in skits is increasingly becoming a trend among skit providers who, by that act, strive to attract more audience. Many celebrities are also part of skits to endorse the skit creators and promote certain causes and prosocial messages. One major highlight is the presence of a former Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo in Dele Issues (Daily Issues) skit in the year 2017 (The Cable Lifestyle, 2017, para 1–3). While the drama was hilarious as expected, it was Olusegun Obasanjo’s opportunity to encourage the involvement of youths in politics. Celebrities naturally have cultural connotations attached to their being (just as Obasanjo is known as a political figure) but still do well in translating those perceptions of them into the different bodies, movements, and campaigns they support or oppose. This explains what Okorie et al. (2012) call the “match up hypothesis,” which means the ability of a celebrity to fit into the existing role to achieve the desired goal (p. 144). It was also a pleasant surprise to see a first-class Nigerian monarch, the Ooni of Ife feature in the skit of fast-rising social media comedian, Mr. Macaroni. Mr. Macaroni is known for his skits on relationships and his mantra of “Aye o kunle mo” (People no longer kneel) which is not in line with the cultural symbol of respect among the people of Yoruba descents in Nigeria. As a leading monarch and custodian of tradition in the Yoruba kingdom, the Ooni of Ife addressed Mr. Macaroni’s mantra,
advocated for respect and cultural promotion in the skit (BBC News Pidgin, 2020). Since that collaboration, Mr. Macaroni has stopped using the expression “Aye o kunle mo.”

Production of this entertainment format is cheaper and easier compared with producing standard comedy shows, movies, or broadcast entertainment programs. With as little as a smart phone and internet connection to upload the videos, skits can be produced as not much editing or aesthetics is needed. Thus, an average audience or user of social media can easily produce skits by capturing humorous events that happen (Awa-Kalu, 2016). Often, this requires little, and often no, skills or formal training in photography or filmmaking. Indeed, some skit makers produced their early skits with their mobile phones. For instance, self-starter skit maker George Mnguni said he began by using his Samsung tablet for recording and editing. In his words, “I started there, doing (the) most with what you have” (Selepe, 2017). Another skit creator in this category is Taaooma, whose style of comedy is the representation of the life and relationship of a traditional-minded African mother with her family. Taaooma was a novice to video editing when she started producing skits around the behavior of an African mother which many audience in Nigeria and other African countries can relate with and have come to enjoy. Her skits served as her video editing training materials over time (Salaudeen, 2020). Maraji, however, plays multiple roles showcasing several childhood memories, everyday experiences, and the reactions of different types of people to the narrated experiences. While this requires video editing skills to pull off, a comparison of her skits with that of Taaooma shows that “the videos themselves are often clunky, with amateurish camera work and editing. But that, their creators say, is part of the charm” (Okiche, 2020, para 13). Maraji emphasizes that the focus for her is to create content that the audience can relate to rather than the production aesthetics (Okiche, 2020).

Generally, most content providers produce skits on different issues in the society. This is not unfound as it has been discussed earlier that entertainment can be used to preach prosocial messages. Nigerian skit makers have been seen to be active in dedicating certain episodes of their skits to address issues around domestic and sexual violence, cultural values, insecurity, police brutality, and COVID-19 (BBC News Pidgin, 2020; Elike, 2020; The Interview Editors, 2019; Okiche, 2020; Salaudeen, 2020; ThisDay, 2019). Some others, however, are known for theme-based skits and specific comedy styles which provide entertainment on certain identified situations or issues in the society. Frank Donga, for instance, produces skits on job interview sessions (Falayi, 2016) through the portrayal of an unassuming job seeker who experiences the struggles of seeking employment in the Nigerian labor market. Although heavy on comedy, Frank Donga shares tips on interview preparations, communication skills, and confidence needed to excel at job interviews. The goal according to the entertainer is to equip the audience with necessary interview skills, by portraying scenarios that the audience would not like to experience during interviews (The Interview Editors, 2019). Similarly, Mc Lively who hit the limelight through his skits “Agidi” in 2018 has since focused on his new character “Barrister Mike”—an angry unemployed young law graduate who interferes in the business of others (Elike, 2020; ThisDay, 2019). Barrister Mike is also a job seeker who transfers his frustration about his inability to secure employment on others, yet, addressing societal issues. Unlike Frank Donga who plays a dual role (the interviewee and interviewer), Mc Lively uses other actors as the interviewer and supporting characters. However, both comedians use sarcasm in their delivery of entertainment. Also, Officer Wos has maintained a single character of a police officer with the theme of depicting the lifestyle of a cunning law enforcement and security officer since he started social media skit production (Officer Wos, 2021). The trend here is that skit merchants are creating audience-specific skits, thereby generating an audience category that could attract some types of advertisers.

Social Media Skits and the New Entertainment Experience of Broadcast Audience

The emerging reach of skits in the age of social media has brought about a change in audience media consumption habit, expectation, and content production for entertainment. While the audience begin to experience new ways of deriving entertainment gratification, it is only logical that such new exposure would have implications on their use of the broadcast media whose statutory functions include entertainment. This justifies Holt and Sanson’s (2014) call for “media industries to integrate digital technology and socially networked communication with traditional screen media practices” (p. 1).

Global Availability of Skits

The social media possess some features that shape their use among practitioners and the audience (Anjugu, 2013). The audience now have access to global social media platforms where skits all over the world can be viewed, leaving them with an unlimited array of entertainment. Weide, Kevorkian, and Ireland (2011) refer to this as having a “free gateway destination for entertainment content” (p. 10). Boarders, localities, or countries no longer limit entertainment experience for the audience. The audience can access as many skits uploaded on social media from any part the world, for their entertainment pleasure. While it can be argued that some broadcast stations stream some entertainment programs online, many contents are still limited to paid broadcast services, shutting some entertainment possibilities from the audience who go to social media for such entertainment.

Similarly, mobile viewing experience makes social media skits available to the audience through a wider range of
mobile devices and at the time they are willing to watch them. The mobile feature of social entertainment, according to Carey and Elton (2010), has made the audience to develop “expectations that they should be able to get what they want, when they want it and where they want it” (p. 170). With connection to the internet on different mobile devices available in the 21st century, entertainment from skits can be consumed on the go, in the comfort of a room, at work, while commuting, and anywhere at all, at the wish of the audience. It eliminates the boundary of traditional broadcast scheduling and the need for access to a physical television set before the audience is entertained. Thus, whereas mainstream broadcast media viewership is more often a one-off scheduled experience, with occasional repeated transmissions “due to popular demand,” viewers of skits on social media can view contents repeatedly and sometimes download them for offline viewing and sharing.

Community Building

With access to a global entertainment content on the go, the audience develop a social community or “ethos of community” (Cunningham & Craig, 2016, p. 5341) on social media, where followers, subscribers, and supporters constitute a body, which help each other to enjoy entertainment and promote the demand and sustainability for content creators. Through liking, following, and subscribing to pages of people known for posting skits, a social community of people watching, reacting, participating, and demanding for entertainment gratification is formed. In July 2017, the Mark Angel Comedy known for skit making hit one million YouTube subscribers, setting the record as the most viewed channel in Nigeria and Africa. Their social community transcends the shores of Nigeria where they operate, to followers from Australia, Philippines, the United Kingdom, and other parts of the world (Ndeche, 2017). The implication of this is that the social community is made up of a global audience who share their thoughts about posted entertainment contents in the comments section, bringing about a wider interaction as they dialogue while being amused. This highlights the interactive feature of social media, which affects the creation, use, delivery, and overall audience experience of entertainment.

Real-Time Communication and Feedback

Audience members participate with skits by liking, disliking, and commenting. Content providers immediately get feedback about their skits and social media entertainment for the audience becomes a multidirectional flow of interaction making a shift from the one-to-many broadcast experience (Dunu & Uzochukwu, 2015). Members of the social community individually and collectively enjoy the entertainment, even while some consider reading comments made by others equally entertaining (Whiting & Williams, 2013). The dialogue that occurs among the social community of audience in the comments section sometimes helps other audience in their personal entertainment experience. They serve as review or recommendation platforms for audience members to know what to expect, the entertainment quality of the skit, and to help their decision on whether to watch such skits. The interactions also link the audience to related skits or other entertainment contents. The content providers also help in reshaping audience experience of the use of social media for entertainment. Skit makers interact with their audience by giving instructions about skits, reacting to comments, responding to questions, sharing replications of their skits from fans, discussing the skits, and participating in other entertainment activities (Gemsblog, 2016; Showemimo, 2015).

Parasocial Interactions and Relationships

Over time, the interactions among the audience as members of a social community as well as with the content skit providers consciously or otherwise create a psychological bond among audience and with the content providers. Audience members begin to see themselves and the content providers as friends, interacting and using entertainment as though it were a typical social relationship (Nabi, 2014). Horton and Wohl (1956) formally proposed to call this “seeming face-to-face relationship between spectator and performer a parasocial relationship” (p. 215).

In an age characterized by loneliness and seclusion, parasocial relationships have nearly equated normal interpersonal relationship and they have stretched beyond television. Dunn and Nisbett (2014), citing Schramm and Wirth, note that contrary to wide-held opinion that parasocial relationships are developed through television viewing, individuals have been found to engage in parasocial relationships through other media. In their words, “parasocial relationships may also develop as the product of repeated parasocial interaction that occurs through any medium of interaction with a media figure, including online interactions” (Dunn & Nisbett, 2014, p. 27). The problem with parasocial relationships, however, is that they are illusionary, unidirectional, and have little feedback (Dibble et al., 2016; Schiappa et al., 2007). Schiappa et al. (2007) particularly observed that the problem with defining a relationship with a media celebrity or character in a programme as a relationship is that the relationship is unidirectional. Although opportunities for feedback exist, the ability for direct connection of person to person generally is not possible. (p. 301)

For Cohen (2003), parasocial relationships are of peculiar importance for teens as they adopt celebrities and their lifestyles as social standards and sometimes make demigods of celebrities through emotional and sometimes spiritual attachment to them. Such attachments are sometimes taken to
Audience Participation and Entertainment
Cocreation Experience

The interactive experience of social media entertainment also involves sharing of skits. Unlike when watching entertainment on television, audience members can share skits to interact with their online friends and “potentially provide their friends with humour” (Hustead, 2012, p. iv). With technological developments, audience members can also synchronize their various social media accounts (Awa-Kalu, 2016, para 6). Therefore, it becomes possible for an audience member to post a skit on his Instagram page, and his Facebook friends who are not his followers on Instagram can enjoy and join the entertainment trail.

Audience experience of entertainment on social media takes the audience beyond being mere receivers of media contents to being major stakeholders in creating and sustaining what Jenkins et al. (2017) call “participatory culture” (p. 1067). The audience are active individuals whose participation indeed paves the way for the process of media convergence. This as well changes the way the audience think about their usage and relationship with the media. The medium provides interactivity that had been programmed for the audience experience and the available options to choose whether to take part in activities as an individual or a group within the social community in terms of content to be posted and distributed (Jenkins, 2006; Jenkins & Deuze, 2008; Jenkins et al., 2017). This, for Stollfuß (2020), is a culture enabled by social media entertainment which causes the audience to derive entertainment gratification that they find rewarding. Hence, the audience has been strengthened by the mass availability of social media and a wide range of options to be content generators, cocreators, and distributors. Also, audience members sometimes replicate skits posted by known skit providers, making them cocreators. Skit providers “challenge” the audience to come up with their version of certain skits (Gemsblog, 2016; Showemimo, 2015). This has led to the showcase of the creative side of the audience and their willingness to participate in the entertainment activities. As the replication of skits is often taken as competitions and tagged challenges, the audience go as far as soliciting for likes and shares because the audience whose skit has the highest likes or shares wins the challenge and the grand prize (Gemsblog, 2016; Showemimo, 2015). Meanwhile, some of these challenges are for charitable causes and/or fun. Taking the Ice Bucket Challenge (Trejos, 2017), for instance, recording and posting of the process of dumping a bucket of ice and water over an individual’s head, nominating others to do same, and watching the failed attempts provide comic relief and interactive entertainment experience.

Social media also allow the audience to interact with contents in ways that they can record humorous activities around them and share online. This way, they assume the role of a content provider (originator/sender) of the entertainment and other audience members perform the role of receivers—viewing and interacting with the content.

Having identified the power of the online community in using, engaging, creating, and demanding for social media skits, content creators try to satisfy the audience as the competition for fan base/loyalty also occurs among them. On one hand, content providers frequently upload new skits to attract and sustain the attention of the audience. On the other hand, the audience have many skits at their disposal, giving them the constant entertainment experience opportunities and gratification wanted (Sturges, 2015).

Audience Redefining Entertainment Content for Creators

Online audience members enjoy entertainment even as more contents are made available by comedians who sometimes release humorous skits to test new comedy materials (Sturges, 2015). This is a shoot before the show, a trend in which comedians use skits to pretest or promote their comedy and whet the appetite of prospective attendees or audience at their shows, a medium of test running the quality of their work before it gets to the stage or theater. Hence, the audience engage in defining and redefining entertainment for skit providers themselves and other online audience. Comments from the audience are used to evaluate such materials and the audience, while being entertained, become stakeholders in shaping entertainment for the larger social community. Entertainment via social media skits is sometimes experienced as teasers to even greater entertainment experiences for the audience. While the audience are enjoying the entertainment made available on social media, skit makers try to impress the audience with their comedy prowess to get their
support or recommendation for other entertainment engagements. This is of advantage to the audience as they seem to enjoy quality entertainment contents even as this might be a call to entice the audience to upcoming comedy shows. Even better are free tickets, discounted tickets, and other incentives sometimes given to online viewers who follow the entertainment engagement to offline settings like comedy shows (Ashley & Tuten, 2015; Gemsblog, 2016; Showemimo, 2015).

**Mainstreaming of Advertising and Development Communication in Entertainment**

Audience involvements in social media entertainment have been observed among media practitioners such that advertisers and development communicators are beginning to take over this space (Cunningham & Craig, 2016; Sheth & Kim, 2017). This brings about the opening of a new terrain of entertainment experience for the audience who now have marketing and prosocial elements injected in their entertainment content. While they are being amused, the entertainment subtly addresses brand support, purchase, and practice intention of the audience. Consequently, the audience sometimes get informed and educated while being entertained. An example can be drawn from a skit by the Mark Angel Comedy group on social media. This episode presents Emmanuella in her usual troublesome character trying to get her uncle’s attention to buy her a toy while he selects many items to impress a prospective wife. At her uncle’s refusal, Emmanuella successfully dissuades her uncle’s proposed wife from accepting the shopping items or marrying him because he does not have a retirement savings account and is not saving for their future. Emmanuella advises her uncle to immediately go to Leadway Pensure (a Nigerian pension firm) to secure his future. This skit passed for the usual witty ways of Emmanuella in the Mark Angel Comedy and indeed provided comic relief until she mentioned Leadway Pensure in her closing line, and the logo of the pension firm was shown (Mark Angel Comedy, 2016). In the same vein, Taaooma addressed the attitude of individuals to COVID-19 and preventive measures such as the use of face masks, social distancing, and sanitizing of hands in a social media skit (Taaooma’s Cabin, 2020; Ukomadu, 2020). This was essential to sensitize the audience and complement the information disseminated by approved health sources. While the populace appreciates the skit for providing relief in an already tensed environment experiencing a pandemic, a report by Reuters gathered that such entertainment-education contents make it easier for the audience to remember the message of the communicator (Ukomadu, 2020).

**Discussion and Suggestions**

Social media permeates nearly every aspect of society and has brought about a new wave of online entertainment. As the proliferation of social media expands, new ways of content consumption, participation, and distribution emerge, expanding and redefining audience experience of entertainment. One of the emerging online entertainment avenues is social media skit. Social media skits are observed to be an evolving form of entertainment that not only provide a different experience from traditional broadcast content consumption but also deliver their own unique experience within the online entertainment space. Within the context of online entertainment, this article has presented a discussion with reference to textual and scientific scholarship on how social media skits are reshaping the entertainment experience of the audience in seven perspectives.

The availability of skits on social media is reshaping how the audience experience entertainment. The arguments for this have been based on the audience’s increasing entertainment gratification, enhanced by specific social media features, which make the experience different from that obtained from the traditional entertainment broadcast media. Entertainment for the audience is now beyond boarders as they can access skits uploaded on social media from around the globe, that are not bound by specific broadcast viewing times because entertainment is now available in real time and can be viewed at the convenience of the audience on mobile devices. Participation experience for audience is also changing as they produce their own skits, replicate skits and join skit challenges, interact with other members of the audience and content providers with whom they develop parasocial interactions, and redefine entertainment through their comments and reviews which help other members of the audience in their use of entertainment and comedians in improving comedy materials. The authors submit that the availability of skits on social media opens up a new vista of entertainment experience for the audience, where they engage, demand, own, and become important stakeholders in entertainment. Content production, delivery, and use of social media will continue to evolve in every aspect as technological updates are introduced. This will continue to affect the use of social media and the way people see and experience entertainment. There would be increased audience interest and participation that would further encourage brands to engage the audience more with challenges and increase budget for adverts and participation rewards. It therefore becomes germane for the broadcast media to integrate social media technology in delivering entertainment to the audience. It might be worth producing interactive skits on the social media platforms of broadcast media and airing some of them on the stations, else the broadcast media might lose their audience to social media entertainment. In an era characterized with debates of the future sustainability of the broadcast media, the participatory and continuously evolving social media platforms are expected to challenge the broadcast media to develop new ways that would again alter the forms the audience experience entertainment which is the traditional function of the legacy mass media.
Social media skits have a great future as there would be various diversifications in their use and invariably the experience. Although they are currently used to communicate humor-infused prosocial messages, they would be put to greater use in political campaigns and as satire. The production of skits about current happenings and situations, the audience would begin to question and address societal issues, assess government and political systems, hence, become watchdogs, and ensure political accountability. This may also bring about more spontaneous skit recordings that might not require professional acting and editing among the audience contributors. The government is likely to respond in the format through which the masses send their complaints; thus, there might be an evolution of social media skits for public service orientation and from the government. Thus, skits in social media may become the new face of social change campaigns as observed by Chattoo (2017), that

Audiences who seek out smart, civically-focused comedy and entertainment may do so for more than one reason—to be entertained and to make sense of serious information . . . And when audiences seek and use entertainment with active “truth-seeking motivations,” they process the civic information in such a way that sparks “reflective thoughts . . . issue interest, and information seeking.” (p. 12)

Just as the audience continue to expose themselves to more social media skits, their sophistication and want for entertainment are most likely to expand. The implication of this is that the audience would begin to grow resilience toward substandard contents while aesthetics and quality would assume more importance in skits production. The ability to meet the needs of the audience in this regard would also influence the sustainability of skit creators in the entertainment industry.

On the part of the skit makers, factors such as followership, audience engagement, advert placements, and the opportunities to take up other similar roles in movies and as comperes would spur them to pay more attention to building good careers from social media skit production. Therefore, more attention would be placed on creativity, professionalism, and promoting (advertising) their skits across different social media platforms. Skit makers would also begin to make compilation of their top skits or issue-specific episodes into movies and for audience viewing in cinemas.

With the continuous evolution of the internet and its economic benefits, commercialization of social media skits as an entertainment genre in future is a possibility. This is already the reality in Singapore in the case of Instagram fashion influencers who have been able to leverage on “follower-anchored Instagram advertorials” for financial reward (Abidin, 2016). This concept shows the investment and labor followers put into the advertorials posted by the social media influencers by reposting to friends. This, in turn, gives the influencer more commercial return. Directly or otherwise, the audience provide free advertising platforms, increased customer reach, and improved sales for influencers. An even more direct form of investment on the part of the audience is the payment of membership fee in exchange for exclusive content that has been enabled by Patreon for content creators on YouTube (Wilson & Wu, 2020). This is indeed a form of commercialization that Wilson and Wu (2020) reported to be motivating for content creators as the authors found that YouTube channels crowdfunding through Patreon released videos more frequently than those not linked to Patreon. Therefore, future studies should examine the willingness of the audience to view commercial skits for pay. Results from this study might provide deeper insights into the business side of social media skits.

Over time, the economic benefits of social media skits will be extended to the audience. To increase the user experience of entertainment, the content created by the audience would make to the pages of social media skits with the potential of acceptability from other audience members, and such skits can go viral. In the long run, the same attraction that advertisers have to skit makers will apply to these viral user-generated content. In the same vein, we expect the creation and increase in user-friendly mobile applications that blend social media and skits. This would allow for collections of skits and opportunities for the audience to begin to earn money from viewing and promoting skits.

Limitations and Further Studies

Although this study provides descriptive and conceptual insights into how social media skits are opening up new entertainment options for broadcast media audience, some of its findings may not apply across all age groups and cultures. Studies have shown that internet and social media use varies among age groups, and the older age group uses social media significantly less than the younger groups. For instance, Han (2008) notes that “. . . younger people spend more time than older people not only on the general use of the internet, but also in using internet for certain purposes” (p. 72). See also Smith and Anderson (2018, para 2) and Neves et al. (2018, pp. 21–22). Therefore, social media skits may not offer any major excitement for the older age group. This applies to culture also, as this affects people’s ways of life including their use of social media entertainment. In China, spoof videos entertain the audience, yet they have been of more value and use for political discourse, criticism, and facilitation of political participation (H. Li, 2016). Furthermore, audience response could be subjective to culture and mood depending on what the media entertainment means to the audience in their works of life (Stollfuß, 2020). Odağ et. al. (2018) in an earlier study report that cultural variables such as collectivism, interdependence, ethnic identity, individualism, and independence are predictors of media entertainment motivations.

Another limitation to this study is that it is “theoro-conceptual” in approach. An empirical study of the subject could
produce a different result that would reveal deeper underlying factors and variables affecting broadcast media audience use of social media skits, as well as reveal and explain more psychodemographic patterns in the use of social media skits for entertainment. Much of the findings of this current work would, however, provide good literature and theoretical support for such study.

Future studies should examine the extent to which social media skits could predict television or stage comedy viewing among audiences. That is, how well can we isolate the influence of social media skits in motivating audiences to attend comedy shows or view them on television? This might reveal some limitations of skits as an evolving mode of audience entertainment and also reveal their complementary roles in television or stage comedy viewing.

Open Research Issues

Social media skit classification

Generally, social media skits are understood as different forms and genres of storytelling through which the audience experience and enjoy entertainment gratification from comedy skits uploaded on social media. However, the issue arising is defining classifications for this form of entertainment as we have established that they are delivered using different themes, specific comedy styles, and targeting social issues. The recent use of social media skits to educate the audience about COVID-19 is an example of direct use of skits for health and development purposes. The need for classification is even more germane bearing in mind that what an individual considers funny might not appeal to another; hence, individuals may prefer one category of social media skits above another. Therefore, social media skit classification will be needed to fully put into context content categories that creators might or might not be aware they are establishing and for the research community to be able to retrieve specific data sets (such as political social media skits, feminism social media skits, health social media skits, and fitness social media skits) to enhance research studies in specific aspects of online entertainment.

Social media skit use among the audience

Further research issues will be to understand the hedonic and eudaimonic entertainment motivations for the use of social media skits among the audience. It is essential to empirically explore the factors responsible for audience acceptability of and engagement with social media skits, and how this differs from other forms of online entertainment. What style of comedy are individuals attracted to and what themes are they more favorably disposed to in social media skits? What types of social media skit challenges do the audience mostly respond to and why? What themes do they pay attention to or what themes enjoy more followership? In the same vein, the text, emoji, and memes are other forms of entertainment which the audience respond to social media skits and should be analyzed to understand the audience better. This would further help to establish the relationship between the goal of the content provider and the response of the audience.

Global social media entertainment experience

Social media is a global phenomenon that allows the audience to enjoy unlimited content not bound by geographical location or space. However, the use of social media and the entertainment experience cannot be generalized. Therefore, another research issue is to understand factors responsible for the different findings on the use of social media skits and entertainment across the globe and why findings are not generalizable. A review of existing literature in this field can be conducted to deduce the different factors responsible for this disparity in findings. Furthermore, research studies could be conducted using the cross-sectional or longitudinal approach across different countries to showcase the differences in the types of audience, content, distribution, and engagement of online entertainment.

Conclusion

Globally, there is a community of producers who create content to entertain their audience online. An emerging content form enabled and characterized by the concept of online entertainment is social media skit which this article argues to be reshaping the entertainment experience of the audience. We have illustrated how online skit creators leverage this emerging field to either start or grow their comedy career, increase their followership, incorporate adverts and promote entertainment-education, initiate collaborations with public figures, and address societal and relatable issues in the bid to entertain the audience members who are receptive to entertainment. On the part of the audience, the possibilities of entertainment gratification from this form of online entertainment encourage consumption, active participation, and distribution.

In future, we expect an evolution in which the audience become key stakeholders in social media skit creation. Beyond the content created by the audience during skit challenges and other forms of participation, audience content would become major content on the social media pages of skit creators, they would receive rewards for their participation, pay to watch skits, and promote skit makers’ content to enhance more financial rewards for the content creators. Evidence of a possible financial reward for creators as facilitated by the audience can be seen in Abidin’s (2016) study of “follower-anchored Instagram advertorials.”

More than ever, the entertainment experience of the audience would expose them to the use of social media skits for political campaigns and as interventions for behavior change, social change, and development communication.
More interestingly would be how audience engagement and participation would facilitate this process of development through entertainment.

While many social media content creators started with little or no production skills, the audience will desire better-executed contents in terms of production quality in future. This emerging trend would become a key entertainment sector where creators would compete for audience attention, loyalty, and experience, with potentials for expansion of skit making into the movie and cinema industry.

Regardless of the variation in the production, evolution, and use of social media skits, what remain constant are the implications on the audience experience which would pose a challenge to always present new and refreshing ways to bring relaxation, amusement, fun, and laughter or whatever represents entertainment gratification to the audience.

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