Amidst ageing challenges, we can't be left out in the smartphones-selfie bug: Narratives of the elderly in Edo State, Nigeria

Adediran Daniel Ikuomola[1]

Abstract

Generally the growing trend of smartphones and selfies cannot be overemphasised in the discourse of social media and mass communication. Selfie is often highlighted as a domain controlled by the youthful population, relegating the agencies of the aged as active participants in the selfie bug. This article captures the agencies of the aged in the use of selfies as a medium of expression. The study employed qualitative research methodology in the data collection through in-depth interviews among a sample of forty-five (45) elderly persons in Edo State, Nigeria. Narratives reveal the ingenuities, nuances and manoeuvring strategies the elderly regularly employ in the use of selfies in their daily routine and social engagements. These narratives were nevertheless not devoid of the need to show-off their achievements and continuous existence and the influence of the younger generation of children and grandchildren, relatives and friends in the use of smartphones and selfies.

Keywords

Elderly, smartphones, resilience, agency, representation

[1] Department of Sociology, Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba-Akoko, Ondo State, Nigeria
diranreal@yahoo.com; adediran.ikuomola@aaua.edu.ng

Introduction

Certainly, there is excellent work to be found on the social aspects of mobile photography (Albury, 2015; Gye, 2007; Steenson, 2006), documentation of the self through digital photography (Ardévol & Gómez-Cruz, 2012; Rettberg, 2014), and the history of artistic and vernacular self-portraiture leading up to the advent of selfies (Roberts, 2011; Hall, 2014). Academics in the fields of media and cultural studies have been slower to weigh in the agency of the elderly in the selfie bug and smartphones usage especially in Africa. This article examines the agencies and ingenuities of the elderly in the use of smartphones applications as a process of self exploration, and a course of action in constructing their online and offline identities, specifically in the use of selfies as a medium of communicating personal and social existences in Nigeria. Selfie has been described by several scholars as a practice (a gesture), which involves sending (and is often intended to send) different messages (through photographic images) to different individuals, communities, and audiences, which also provokes reactions such as likes, comments, and remixes (Senft and Baym, (2015). Common features of the discourses about selfies have tended to be diverse and extreme both in definition and agency, oftentimes within the socio-political space of the youth, undermining the space and agency of the aged (Marwick, 2015; Posner, 2015; Turkle, 2013; Senft and Baym 2015; Fox, & Rooney 2015; Senft, 2008; 2013; Schwarz, 2010). Senft and Baym (2015) emphasized categorically that the deployment of selfie is an indicator that one is young, fun, and connected. For Posner 2015, selfie pedagogies are best situated in a critical interrogation of contemporary discourses of adolescence and young adulthood as they intersect with digital cultures.

Youth dominance of the social media space and the selfie bug has also been connected with discourses of pathology (Fox, & Rooney 2015; Senft, 2008; Schwarz, 2010). However as a form of human agency, selfie functions both as a practice of everyday life and as the object of socializing and politicizing discourses, using the internet and the social meida, the aged are neglected in the study of selfies despite the various dimensions of selfies such as political selfies, joke selfies, sports-related selfies, fan-related selfies, illness-related selfies, household selfies, selfies at funerals, or selfies at places like museums among others are spaces not totally occupied by the youth. In the same vein, the aged are often termed as resistant to change and portrayed as having anxiety feelings towards unfamiliar space and technology (United Nations Populations Division, 2009; Ehmen et. al., 2012; Ejechi, 2013; Egwu, 2013; UNFPA & Help Age International (2012). This has been linked with mobile phone industries   targeting younger age groups who switch phones relatively frequently and admire smaller devices with multifunctions (Fitzpatrick, & Roberts, 2004; Marwick 2015; Senft and Baym, 2015), unlike the aged who have been tagged as users who do not have the same visual and hearing sensitivity, finger dexterity, and working memory as the younger age groups; and that they may have problems using smartphones and mobile phones with smaller buttons, screen and text; and complex functions (Akeredolu-Ale & Aribiah, 2001; Chen, et al., 2013; Mallenius, Rossi, and Tuunainen, 2007; Kurniawan, 2008). It is generally

overemphasized that older adults' physiological and psychosocial characteristics are different from the younger age groups regarding the requirements and needs of mobile and smartphone usage. And as such mobile phones with fewer functions have been stated as satisfying to older users demand; and that phones with too many functions will make the devices more complex and result in redundant learning (Chen et al., 2013).

Literature review

Pervasiveness of smartphones in Nigeria: The demographics

Globally mobile and smartphones have become topical in recent decade, irrespective of the socioeconomic, cultural, educational and literacy barriers in Africa and other developing world. The mobile phone subscriber penetration rate in Nigeria remained on the upward swing as the most populous black nation and one of the richest countries in Africa, with about 94 per cent. In 2016 Statista, a statistics portal estimated that there were about 15.5 million new users (Adeleke, 2016). The 2017 eMarketer profiling of countries that love smartphones, ranked Nigeria as 17th with 23.1 million smartphones, a figure projected to increase to 34 million in 2018 (Nigerian Communications Commission, 2017). Similarly, statistics from Africa Infotech Consulting (2017) showed that smartphone penetration in Nigeria has increased, gaining about 30 per cent penetration with features' phones having a 70 per cent penetration. In practical terms the Nigerian Communication Commission (NCC) says there are 223 million total mobile phone users as at August 2016 (Adepetun, 2016; Adeleke, 2016; Nigerian Communications Commission, 2017). As in the case with Hong Kong in China, the total number of mobile phones user is higher than Nigeria's population of 180 million, because individual users often have multiple lines and internet connections. Of these there are 722 million mobile phones in Africa, with 127 million being smartphones (Chen; Chan, & Tsang, 2013; Adepetan, 2016). The astronomical increase cannot be explained without reckoning to the inexpensive smartphones that are opening new opportunities for marketing and commerce in emerging markets like Nigeria, where many consumers previously had no access to the internet which has facilitated the use of various platforms in the social media, such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, Instagram among others (Nigerian Communications Commission, 2017). The global statistics revealed that, Facebook has over 1.5 billion users monthly with about 798 million accessing the site on their mobile phones, adding that WhatsApp has over 700 million users who are sending over 30 billion messages everyday (Adepetan, 2016).

The demographics of these figures are at best gendered and classified as mainly involving the youth, without adequate documentation and disaggregation of the elderly population in the mobile and smartphone statistics. Studies have revealed that there are over 302 million monthly users of Twitter, with Instagram having over 300 million active users per month. Of which LinkedIn has over 332 million registered members with PInterest having 70 million users with 56 per cent of them being females (Adeleke, 2016; Danbatta; 2016). Similarly passing statements are often made on the benefits of mobile phones to the elderly users only in support of their daily life. One of such usages is to stay

connected with others, such as children, grandchildren, and friends in a convenient and cheaper way, mostly through traditional phone calls (Plaza, Martín, Martin, & Medrano, 2011); another is in the domain of safety-security mechanism (Mallenius, Rossi, and Tuunainen, 2007). Phones with functions like safety alarm and person location enable the elderly to get immediate emergency and health supports by pushing the emergency button. Mobile phones also can be considered as memory aids for compensating ageing-related memory decline. The functions of appointment reminder, alarm, and address book can help elders schedule and remember performing daily life activities. Besides, smartphones offer entertaining exercises beyond games and audio-visual player functions of the traditional simple mobile phones. One of such is the use of mobile phones for taking/snapping selfies. Most, if not all mobile and smartphones today come with cameras, MP3, address book, and more advanced features such as sending and receiving e-mails and video calls. Selfies have not only come of age but have also become increasingly fashionable in the social media era, where individuals irrespective of their age are willing to share selfies in various social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and Flicker. Therefore the following specific questions guided the research to understand and identify the lived experiences of the aged in smartphone-selfie usage: How do the aged engage themselves with smartphones? How do they manoeuvre smartphones applications and for what purposes? Generally this study examined the aged ingenuity and resilience (agency) in manoeuvring smartphones and selfies engagement.

Research methods

This article reports on a purely qualitative and exploratory study. It was conducted in Edo State, Nigeria between December 2016 and May 2017. A purposive sample with a convenience population was utilized. The sample was composed of 45 respondents (27 men and 18 women), who are well informed and in possession of smartphones, as well as making regular use of selfies on different social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, Instagram and WhatsApp. The respondents comprised of non-dementing senior citizens (retirees from the civil service, and senior citizens who have always been privately engaged). About a quarter of the respondents however still leisurely engaged in petty trading, light artisanship, and backyard farming to keep fit and for supplementary income. The age of the respondents was between 65 and 78 years. About two-third (29 of the respondents) were retirees while others (16 respondents) have always been self engaged. Data for this study consist of in-person interview (semi-structured interview) conducted by the researcher in English and pidgin mixed with *Bini* local dialects. All interviews were audio recorded. Interviews averaged one hour. The shortest interview was 40 minutes and the longest lasted just over one hour and 15 minutes. The variability in interview duration was a product of the semi-structured nature of the interviews, as well as variation among individuals in terms of experiences with smartphones applications, selfie usage and desire to discuss personal experiences with a relative stranger. Data analysis followed the iterative process that often characterises grounded theory in particular, and qualitative research more generally (Emerson, Fretz &

Shaw, 1995). During data collection, I took extensive field notes on any interactions and observations relevant to the study of the aged and their ability to use selfies in communicating lived experiences with their smartphones. The discussion was limited to issues related to the use of selfies in their daily lives. The principle of anonymity and confidentiality of respondents were maintained. This informed the use of pseudo-names in the transcription, sorting, and analysis of responses.

After data collection was completed, I identified and sorted themes apparent in the aged narratives through line-by-line analysis. Once initial memos were written and links between themes became clearer, I returned to the full body of data to begin focused content analyses. Focused content analysis helped me to ensure that the themes that emerged from the initial subset of the data were both relevant to and appropriately configured for the full set of data. In the paragraphs below, I present the content and structure of these themes and demonstrate how the aged go about using selfies2.

Empirical findings and discussion

The ingenuity and resilience of the aged towards smartphone-selfie use: Nuances and manoeuvring strategies

Contrary to the general opinions that there are physical and cognitive barriers impeding older peoples' usage of advanced functions in smartphones as put forward by (Tse, Choi, & Leung, 2008; Chen & Chan, 2011), this study reveals otherwise that the aged are involved in the acts and habits of taking selfies, thus they can no longer be left out in the discourse, space and enthusiasm of smartphones and selfie taking. It was mentioned that age is not a barrier amidst the complexities in making use of modern and sophisticated mobile and Smartphones. Mr. Rufus noted that:

> It is often annoying when people say that senior citizens are not 21st century compliant in terms of computer literacy, and most annoying is the assumption that we cannot also make use of smartphones. This is completely false. No matter how complex a smartphone is, what is needed is patience to learn how to operate it. Even the so called youth who claim smartphone is for them also learn from one another (Male/68years/Retired Craftsman).

The need for perseverance and wisdom were described by another respondent as the key motivating factor in the use of smartphones.

> For me I keep asking my grandchildren to teach me how to operate newer phones. I cannot be left out of the new technology. Smartphones and the internet are colourful in nature and features. And the easy to which it can be operated, if well taught can only just be interesting. Every elderly person will love the soft taping of buttons rather than typing which stresses the fingers (Ifueko/ Female/73years/Trader).

---

2 Selfie is used in this article to mean (private and public portraits and pictures), contextual, inoffensive and ethical images.

It is known that the use of advanced functions, such as Global Positioning System (GPS), email, Wi-Fi internet and notepad (irrespective of age) requires the users to be familiar and skilful with the manipulation of mobile and smartphones and to learn new skills, at least to a certain extent. This was very much the case with the learning ability of the aged as they displayed what they have learnt over time since the commencement of Global System of Mobile Communication (GSM) in Nigeria. They all noted that learning how to use new phones and computer gadgets were a bit difficult at first, but made easier and possible through contacts with friends, colleagues, the media, as well as consistent pressure from children and grandchildren.

Though studies on technology usage generally posit that with age-related declines in cognitive abilities, older people become slower in acquiring technological skills (Ziefle and Bay, 2005; Kurniawan, 2008); and that some of them even experience anxiety to new technologies (Tse, Choi, & Leung, 2008; Chen & Chan, 2011). This study proved otherwise in smartphone usage, as senior citizens in Edo State were easily found in possession of smartphones. The rising trend of elderly population owning smartphones can be attributed to the falling prices of smartphones coming in from China and other Asian countries, thus the rate at which most people are increasingly replacing and upgrading their phones have accentuated in the last decade (Adeleke, 2016). Similarly, smartphones possession creates a status symbol, through remittances from abroad. This cannot be overemphasised as Edo State is one of the leading states in Nigeria with a high number of migrants in Europe and America. It is often said that it is difficult to imagine a household in Edo State without a family member overseas (Osezua, 2013; Ikuomola, 2015). Generally having a child or relative abroad was expected to uplift the status of the aged in the community, just as in other countries with long migration history. Findings in Mexico, India and Senegal revealed how household and the aged overcome difficulties and constraints by expanding their ingenuity, responsibilities and acquisition of skills in tasks hitherto not envisaged (Hondagneu-Setelo 1999; Mascarenhas-Keyes 1990; Mondain & Diagne 2013). Some of these ingenuities of the aged have often gone unnoticed. In Edo State, elders were found engaging with smartphones applications and functions beyond making and receiving calls, which is in discordance with findings from previous selfie studies (Ziefle and Bay, 2005; Kurniawan, 2008). Just as older people said they do not want to be left out, so also their children do not want their aged parents to be left behind in what is trending as buttressed below by a retired school teacher:

> There is nothing difficult in operating any phone or simple electronic gadget, all what we as seniors need to do, is to read through the manual and start using them. In cases where there is no manual accompanying a phone, we rely on those who have used similar phones to teach us and get started. For instance my son sent me an Iphone from Canada and I kept it for a while because it was quite different and difficult from the simpler and cheaper phones I have used in the past. After much pressure from my children, one day I took it as a challenge that I must learn how to put it into use, so I called on an older friend who has an iphone, and that was how I started pinging, taking selfies and tagging friends on Facebook, WhatsApp and Twitter (Edemwen/Male/76 years/Retired Principal).

Similarly another corroborated:

> Over time I have learnt so many things, from sending messages, recording events, to taking pictures, and making video calls. And now I can teach others. Learning is a continuous thing. Once one is open to new ideas, age is not a barrier, as there are people around to teach and to be taught. These applications on smartphones, though at first look complex, but in no time they become easy to operate. I often disturb my children and neighbours until I got used to the apps on my phones (Irene/ Female/72yearsRetired Civil Servant).

The use of the smartphones for capturing life events and keeping memories through selfie was important in the selection criteria of respondents. Interviews and discussions showed that older generation has also been caught in the web of organizing their lives through smartphones technology, making use of selfies and wearable devices to see and shape themselves. Two-third of the respondents noted their transition from simpler mobile phones (with single camera) to smartphones with double cameras (back and front) that are internet enabled, was made possible by the trend and the pressure to be technologically relevant. Mrs Omosigho and Mr. Ogbeide reiterated how they became active users of WhatsApp and Facebook, and much later with Instagram and Twitter, with the statements 'when smartphone becomes a gift after retirement, what do you expect afterwards…. and 'overtime seeing ones' children performing unimaginable tasks, is motivating enough to get along'. These narratives are fully captured below:

> I was only opportune to have a smartphone as a gift on the eve of my retirement (at the age of 65years two years ago) in a disengagement party organised by my mentees in the teaching service. So I had no choice but to start learning how to make use of it. And secondly as a widow, I had to engage and keep myself busy with new things. The smartphone became a companion of sort, first I was taught how to use the WhatsApp, Facebook and Twitter and more recently Instagram by my children and housemaids. The gift of a smartphone has connected me to people I thought I would never see again in my life. I do not know if I can do without it. For now I am more occupied with it when the house is lonely. I keep myself busy with regular viewing and sending of pictures, selfies of all manners, hearing voices, staying connected with WhatsApp, Skype and other applications installed by my children (Omosigho/Female/67years/Retired Teacher).

For Mr. Ogbeide, he was first fascinated with video calls often made by his children, which his simple phone had no capacity to do. He later became inquisitive and overtime got used to browsing, posting, receiving of pictures and commenting through phones[3], thus when he had mastered the use of his children's phones, he decided to get himself a smartphone:

> After learning that my children were not performing any magic after all with their phones, and knowing that I was going to learn faster and better with my own smartphone, it became wiser to purchase one and also to reduce the pressure and discomfort of using their phones for practice sessions (Male/72years/Retired Artisan).

---

[3] Posting, receiving of pictures and comments were often with family members and friends

The above narratives revealed the inquisitiveness, motivation and learning capacity of the aged in their voyage to smartphones usage. Consequently, smartphone usage creates a new form of association, attachment and friendship which attest to agency in the life course of aging. The autonomy, independence and control of the aged are well displayed by respondents as none was harshly compelled in their narratives to switch over from simpler mobile phones to smartphones. Thus the capacity to make independent decisions, including making choices whether to or not to make use of smartphones was well emphasised. The aged make adjustments in their interpersonal relationships toward connectedness with others and trending technology. The need for connectedness becomes more important upon retirement and widowhood. Connectedness through selfie plays out in the family, kinship, and friendship. Through smartphone technologies, and internet applications, new opportunities for respondents to pursue hobbies, maintain a social life, have fun and give more time to recalling and connecting past and present events are enabled.

Smartphones and selfies in the aged daily routine and social engagements

Respondents reveal the inherent complexities of understanding the selfie as a product of the advancement of digital image-making and online image-sharing as well as a social phenomenon that serves as a means of individual and creative self-expression. Though it is a common practice, seeing the younger ones taking self-portraits and other times posing for others and more frequently at odd time and in unimaginable places (Albury, 2015); the aged were more cautious and limit their selfie activities to friends and families. Thus for the aged who have close relatives living in a distant environment within the country, and rothers (most especially children and younger relatives) living abroad selfies have become a medium of interaction that bridges social and physical distances. Pa Omojowo narrated how helpful selfie posting and sending continuously keep every member of the family abreast of happenings in Nigeria:

> I had to become selfie freak since my children are all overseas, they are always eager to know what I am up to. Sometimes they want to know what I am wearing and the condition of my health, other times they even want to see me taking my drugs, they want to know and I also want to know through pictures if I am getting older than my age. It has become a daily routine to send them pictures of myself and their mother. It is even more frequent when either of us is sick or admitted into the hospital (Male/69years /Retired Forest Guard).

Mrs Simi corroborated her addiction to sending and receiving selfies from her relatives and friends in major cities, and faraway places as signs that all is well with them:

> These days I am always online not only chatting, but posting and viewing selfies, as well. It has become my habit to communicate and express myself with pictures, even when the doctors are saying I am sick and that there is the need for me to take a bed rest. I detest the hospital environment, but with my phone I have a companion. My children, friends and neighbours know this, and once my relatives see me online they get to know I am really alright. It has also become a medium to know when I am not in the

best of conditions. Other times relatives mistakenly think I am sick when probably the internet is the problem (Female/71years/Retired Nurse).

Mr. Okon, at 75years has this to say:

> I agree that I am now too old to be visiting distant friends and family members, but the use of the internet and smartphones have made my life more interesting and most times I feel ageless, as I have been able to locate friends and relatives, and relatives of colleagues and their children. The internet has been very useful in getting their contacts (phone numbers) for those still alive and information about those who are no more. Apart from posting selfies, I also search and post pictures, images and documents of past events and ceremonies before retirement. Through Facebook and Instagram, I ignite discussions and criticisms, other times reconciliations are made among quarrelling friends. I am seen as an arbiter among my retiree friends. Also I have been able to connect and help some of our friends and old colleagues in need (Male/75years/Retired Civil Servant).

The narrative of ageless self by the respondent above argues for a body image that is independent of chronological age that obtains from the continuous narration of one's life. Continuous restructuring and expression [of identity] allow respondents to maintain a feeling of unity, happiness and sense of belonging about themselves and a sense of connection with the parts of their past they consider relevant to who they are at the present (Kaufman, 1986:150). The use of selfie by Mr. Okon is not only retrospective; it looks at life as a continuous process across the life course, linking the past, the present and the future. It is a mental state of adaptation as well as action, in what Atchley (1989:183) refers to as a grand adaptive strategy that is promoted by both individual preference and social approval in his continuity theory of normal aging. Narratives from respondents relate selfie engagement with sociality and activity, health and longevity, and resources as important determinants of happiness. Though happiness can be described as personal and normal no matter ones' status in life (Franklin, 2009; Esteban, 2013), one thing is clear among respondents, they see selfie as a medium that does not only create sociality, but also happiness, which is about sharing one's life (past and present) with others. In this context, the creation and sharing of selfies deployed a range of social media practices, including those Couldry (2012) has defined as showing and being shown;" and "prescencing, or "managing presence to others across space (p. 49).

In another interview, Elder Emmanuel reveals that children and grandchildren have made selfies compulsory in his house:

> If I am not doing the selfie thing, my children are readily available to bug me with phone calls and to put me online. They often jokingly tell me that I am old but I should not be seen as old fashion. Even though my children and grandchildren often wish me good health and long life, they also find time to remind me of death, and that posted selfies will be a good remembrance package for the family when I am no more. So I have been caught in the bug to also please them (Male/78years/Retired Trader).

Elders in African culture are highly revered as repositories of wisdom, widely consulted as custodians of traditions and customs, for which their activities need to be

captured in their old age. Technology through the use of smartphones and selfies has made this relatively easier. They are also seen as the bridge between the society (the living) and the dead (ancestors).

Another reiterated:

> Everyday at least there is something to tell someone about my feelings through pictures, so at every ceremony or event, from marriages on Saturdays, church service on Sundays to shopping and visiting of friends, my selfie says it all with fewer or no words (Asemota/Female/70years/Retired Court Clerk).

Furthermore, Mrs, Asemota noted that her children will always want to know what is happening in any occasion or activity she is involved, basically in all her schedule especially outside the immediate environment. The selfie thing has now become a tracking habit for the family. Another reason favouring selfies is the poor network and weak speed of the internet facilities in local communities. Akinsumade explained that since the internet is not often strong enough for video calls, selfies thus become a quick and better option in this clime.

The aged, selfies and social connectedness

The elderly are a group unto themselves or, as Omosigho says, égbe né pataki, to denote identity, solidarity and connectedness. They often prefer same gender and same age-range friends, and they are loyal to one other. For the fact that most retirees tend to relocate from the city to their hometowns usually in the suburbs (villages), the social media through Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, among other apps become handy to keep in touch, while those within the same locale still find time to visit one another, attend ceremonies together and hang out in the evenings sharing memories of the past as captured in selfies. Moreover, Edema says:

> We condole with one another in cases of death using selfies to express and activate a sober mood. We also celebrate anniversaries of our retirements, children getting married, and graduation parties. All these are made possible through several pictures, selfie, hashtags, on Instagram and sometimes twitter. With these, we see what colleagues, friends and families are saying and join the conversations especially on events one is unable to attend. These platforms unite us. It is as if we live and see ourselves everyday regardless of the distance (Edema/Female/68years/Retired Head Teacher).

For another respondent, twitting and re-twitting of selfies of past and present looks, not only tell us of the changes that have taken place over the years, but also serve as platform of information and ideas, to educate, explain and discuss events around people, pictures and selfies, that are inspirational, interesting, motivating and full of wisdom. This is captured in Papilo's narrative of how his last child was inspired to become a medical doctor after seeing a selfie of a family friend.

> In one of my colleague's selfie with his medical doctor son, taken on a podium of graduands from the State medical school in 1996, which was shared on Facebook and WhatsApp ten years after, the selfie captured the tears on his face. It was tears of joy seeing his child becoming a doctor after eight years in the university. This particular selfie became a reference point and motivating factor for my last child who is currently in the university studying for medical degree. The first time he saw the picture, he whispered to me, saying 'Dad one day our family will have such a picture, not only as a selfie, but a big picture framed and hung in the parlour'. Its gradual becoming a reality he exclaimed! (Papilo/Male/72years/Trader).

Conclusion

There is no doubt that the intensity of daily physical activity of the aged decreases with increasing age, regardless of the amount of support the family provides. Similarly, following the loneliness the elderly often experienced at home, in the absence of their children and grandchildren due to work schedule and other engagements, a number of studies have come to agree that loneliness among the aged awakens their agency to keep themselves engaged and continue with non-strenuous and mental activities (e.g., Edgerton, 2013; Esteban, 2015; Tuomi et al., 1997). This is evident in this study, as the use of smartphones and selfies was paramount in keeping boredom away. The elderly in this study state that they are energised while online, posting and receiving photographic information, such as daily selfies, which they described as a routine update of pictures and information about life, friends, neighbours and other images of oneself, private and public personalities; and their state of wellness. This is to emphasize aging as a process not only of weakness but also of being healthy and strong mentally. The movement from simple mobile phones to smartphones by the elderly finds resonance as an indicator of resilience and resistance in the concept of the ageless self (Butler, 1983; 1989; Kaufman, 1986; McHugh, 2000; Robertson, 1996). The ageless self, though, plays into such concepts as ableism, active aging, productive aging and successful aging, that cast senior citizens who have not (or cannot) transcend with time and technology as frail. This article captures the agencies of the aged in the use of smartphones and selfies in Edo State, Nigeria. Narratives reveal the nuances shown in the elderly learning capacity, and motivations employed in the use of smartphones and selfies in their daily routine and social engagements. The findings were nevertheless not devoid of the need of the aged to show-off their achievements, continuous existence and the influence of the younger generation of children and grandchildren; relatives and friends in the use of selfies. The study concluded that amidst the general views that the aged are passive and resistant to change, there are a number of aged who are active participants in the use of smartphones and selfies in their impact and scope.

R E F E R E N C E S

Adeleke, D. (2016). *There are now 216 million connected telephone lines in Nigeria*. Retrieved from https://techpoint.ng/2016/05/05/now-216-million-connected-telephone-lines-nigeria/.

Adepetun. A. (2016). Nigeria: Smartphone penetration hits 30 percent in Nigeria. *In The Guardian*. Available at http://allafrica.com/stories/201607080930.html

Africa Infotech Consulting (2017). Smartphone market to be worth $355 billion in 2020. Retrieved from http:// m.guardian.ng/tag/Africa-infotech-consulting/&hl=en-NG.

Akeredolu-Ale, E.O & Aribiah, O. (2001) *Public Policy and Old Age Security in Nigeria*. Center for Social Policy, Ibadan Nigeria.

Albury, K. (2015). Selfies, sexts, and sneaky hats: Young Peoples' understandings of gendered practices of self-representation. *International Journal of Communication* 9: 1734–1745.

Ardévol, E., & Gómez-Cruz, E. (2012). Private body, public image: Self-portrait in the practice of digital photography. *Revista de Dialectologia y Tradiciones Populares*, 67, 181-208.

Atchley, R. (1989). A continuity theory of normal aging. *The Gerontologist*, 29, 183-190.

Butler, R.N. (1983). An overview of research on aging and the status of gerontology today. *The Milbank Memorial Fund Quarterly Health and Society*, 61, 351-361.

Butler, R.N. (1989) Dispelling ageism: the cross-cutting intervention. *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 503, 138-147.

Chen, K. & Chan, A.H.S (2011). A review of technology acceptance by older adults. *Gerontechnology*, 10, 1-12.

Chen, K; Chan, AHS; & Tsang, SNH. (2013). Usage of mobile phones amongst elderly people in Hong Kong. *Proceedings of the international multiconference of engineers and computer scientists* Vol II, IMECS, March 13 - 15, Hong Kong.

Couldry, N. (2012). *Media, society, world: Social theory and digital media practice*. Cambridge, UK: Polity.

Danbatta, U. (2016). *Nigeria: Smartphone penetration hits 30 percent in Nigeria*. Available at http://allafrica.com/stories/201607080930.html.

Edgerton, T. (2013) Self-reported aging-related fatigue: A concept description and its relevance to physical therapist practice. *Physical Therapy*, 93, 1403-1413.

Egwu, C. (2013). Modernization and ageing patterns in Nigeria. *International Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities Reviews*, 4(1): 116-119.

Ehmen, H., Haesner, M., Steinke, I., Dorn, M., Gövercin, M., & Steinhagen-Thiessen, E. (2012). Comparison of four different mobile devices for measuring heart rate and ECG with respect to aspects of usability and acceptance by older people". *Appl. Ergon*, 43,582-587.

Ejechi, E. O. (2013). A Comparative study of physical activity and cognitive function of a sample of elderly Nigerians living in a rural and an urban area. *International Journal of Humanities & Social Science*, 3(6):140-150.

Emerson R. M, Fretz R. I & Shaw L. L (1995) *Writing ethnographic field notes*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Esteban, R.C (2015). Thinking about aging: Experience, identity and meaning among an elderly population in the Philippines. *Advances in Aging Research*, 2015, 4, 133-153

Esteban, R.C, Dominguez, J., Yumul, J., Natividad, B., Magpantay, C., Soriano, J.R., et al. (2013). *Quality of life among the Filipino elderly: Glimpses from a community.* Philippine Neuroscience, 1, 15-24.

Fitzpatrick, J. M. & Roberts, J. D. (2004). Challenges for care homes: education and training of healthcare assistant. *British Journal of Nursing*. 13(21), 1258-1261.

Fox, J., & Rooney, M. C. (2015). The dark triad and trait self-objectification as predictors of men's use and self-presentation behaviors on social networking sites. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 76, 161-165.

Franklin, N. (2009). Lifestyle and successful aging. *American Journal of Lifestyle Medicine*, 3, 6-11.

Gye, L. (2007). Picture this: The impact of mobile camera phones on personal photographic practices. *Continuum*, 21(2), 279-288. doi:10.1080/10304310701269107.

Hall, J. (2014). *The self-portrait: A cultural history*. London, UK: Thames and Hudson.

Hondagneu-Sotelo, P. (1999). Introduction: Gender and contemporary U.S. immigration. *American Behavioral Scientist* 42 (4), 565-76.

Ikuomola, A.D. (2015). *Unintended consequences of remittance: Nigerian migrants and intra-household conflicts*. SageOpen, 5(3), 1-8. doi:10.1177/2158244015605353.

Kaufman, S. (1986). *The Ageless self: Sources of meaning in late life*. University of Wisconsin, Madison.

Kemp, B.J. (1999). Quality of life while aging with a disability. *Assistive Technology*, 11(2): 158-163.

Kurniawan, S. (2008). Older people and mobile phones: A multi-method investigation, *International Journal of Human-Computer Studies*, 66: 889-901.

Mallenius, S., Rossi, M., and Tuunainen, V.K (2007). *Factors affecting the adoption and use of mobile devices and services by elderly people-results from a pilot study*. Available:http://www.marshall.usc.edu/ctm/Research.

McHugh, K.E. (2000). The ageless self? Emplacement of identities in Sun Belt retirement communities. *Journal of Aging Studies*, 14, 103-115.

Marwick, A. (2015). Instafame: Luxury selfies in the attention economy. *Public Culture*, 27, 137–160. Retrieved from http:// doi.org/10.1215/08992363-2798379.

Mascarenhas-Keyes, S. (1990). Migration, progressive motherhood and female autonomy: Catholic women in Goa. In: Dube, L.; Palriwala, R., (ed). *Structures and strategies: Women, work and family*. New Delhi: Sage Publications, pp. 119-143.

Mondain, N & Diagne, A. (2013). Discerning the reality of Those left behind' in contemporary migration processes in Sub-Saharan Africa: Some theoretical reflections in the light of data from Senegal. *Intercultural Studies*, 34 (5), 503-516.

Nigerian Communications Commission (2017). *Subscribers Statistics*. Available http://www.ncc.gov.ng/stakeholder/statistics-reports/subscriber-data.

Osezua, C.A. (2013). Changing status of women and the phenomenon trafficking of women for transactional sex in Nigeria: A qualitative analysis. *International Women Studies* 14 (3), 13-30.

Plaza, I., Martín, L., Martin, S., & Medrano, C. (2011). Mobile applications in an aging society: Status and trends, *J. Syst. Software*, 84, 1977-1988.

Posner, M. (2015) *Selfies, Snapchat, and Cyberbullies: Coming of Age Online*. Miriam Posner.com. Retrieved from: http://miriamposner.com/dh150w15/.

Rettberg, J. W. (2014). *Seeing ourselves through technology: How we use selfies, blogs and wearable devices to see and shape ourselves*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.

Roberts, B. (2011). Photographic portraits: Narrative and memory. *Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 12(2), 1–45. Retrieved from http://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/view/1680/3203

Robertson, A.F. (1996). The development of meaning: ontogeny and culture. *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 2, 591-610.

Schwarz, O. (2010). On friendship, boobs and the logic of the catalogue: Online self-portraits as a means for the exchange of capital. *Convergence*, 16(2), 163–183. doi:10.1177/1354856509357582.

Senft, T. (2008). *Camgirls: Celebrity and community in the age of social networks*. New York, NY: Peter Lang.

Senft, T. (2013). Microcelebrity and the branded self. In J. Hartley, J. Burgess, & A. Bruns (Eds.), *A companion to new media dynamics*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.

Senft, T. M and Baym, N. K. (2015). What does the selfie say? Investigating a global phenomenon. *International Journal of Communication*, 9:1588-1606.

Steenson, M. (2006). *Mobile space is women's space: Reframing mobile phones and gender in an urban context*. New Haven, CT: Yale School of Architecture.

Tse, M.M.Y., Choi, K.C.Y., & Leung, R.S.W. (2008). "E-health for older people: The use of technology in health promotion. *Cyberpsychology and Behavior*, 11,. 475-479.

Tuomi, K., Ilmarinen, J.K., Seitsamo, J., Huuhtanen, P., Martikainen, R., Nygård, C., et al. (1997). Summary of the Finnish research project (1981-1992) to promote the health and work ability of aging workers. *Scandinavian Journal of Work, Environment and Health*, 23, 66-71.

Turkle, S. (2013). *Alone together: Why we expect more from technology and less from each other*. New York, NY: Basic Books.

UNFPA & Help Age International. (2012) *Ageing in the twenty-first century: A celebration and a challenge*. New York/ London: UNFPA/ HAI.

United Nations Populations Division. (2009). World population prospects: The 2006 revision.

Ziefle, M. & Bay, S. (2005). How older adults meet complexity: Aging effects on the usability of different mobile phones. *Behaviour. Information. Technology*. 24:375-389.

Adediran Daniel Ikuomola (PhD) is a Senior lecturer in the Department of Sociology, Adekunle Ajasin University, Nigeria. His primary research interest cuts across issues on youth, media and deviance, with emphasis on lifestyle and self-control theories. His work has appeared in Peace and Conflict Review; Arts and Humanities; Culture and Development, and Council of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA).