



THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA NETWORKS ON INSECURITY IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Social media relates to the technology and platforms that enable the interactive web's content creation, collaboration and exchange by participants and the public which is an open electronic communication networks that connects diverse people through online platforms, allowing them to exchange thoughts and ideas. The problem of insecurity is a global phenomenon as it is one of the major issues of concern that is attracting global attention and is fast threatening the corporate existence of many nations where mass media has become a very potent tool in the hand of the government, the general public as well as the perpetrators of violence to get across to the public with the social media networks now taking a lead. The objective of this study was to examine the impact of social media networks on insecurity in Nigeria. A sample size of one hundred and ninety six (196) respondents was drawn from staff and students of Delta State Polytechnic, Ogwashi-Uku. Data were generated through questionnaire and analyzed with Likert five point scale and simple percentage. Result show that majority of the respondents claim that social media have in no small way contributed to insecurity in Nigeria. This is perhaps because everyone is free to post information in the social media such as facebook, twitter, WhatsApp, instagram, etc, without any form of censorship. It was concluded that facebook and WhatsApp networks contributed more to national insecurity. It was recommended amongst others that there should be an encompassing national legislations (laws guiding the use of social media) that would attract strong sanctions on violators.

Keywords: Social Media, Insecurity, Networks, Communication, Internet, Platform

1. Introduction

The mass media generally have a very important role to play in modern society as basic channels of communication. Thus, members of the public rely on them not only as the main sources of information, but also the basis on which they form their opinion on events that take place in the society. With the advent of new technologies, the World has changed from analogue to digital and this has brought about change in every facet of our lives (Asemah, 2011).

Social media relates to the technology and platforms that enable the interactive web's content creation, collaboration and exchange by participants and the public. It is the horizontal system of open electronic communication networks that connects diverse people through online platforms, allowing them to exchange thoughts and ideas. Dewing (2012) as cited in Nnoruka (2017) notes that social media are wide range of internet based and mobile services that allow users to participate in online exchanges, contribute user-created content, or join online communities. He further noted that the kind of internet services commonly associated with social media which is sometimes referred to as web 2.0 are, Blogs, Wikis, Facebook, LinkedIn,



Twitter, WhatsApp, You Tube, 2go, Instagram, etc. They are web-base technologies, desktop computers and mobile technologies (e.g., smartphones and tablet computers) to create highly interactive platforms through which individuals, communities and organizations can share, co-create, discuss, and modify user-generated content or pre-made content posted online. They introduce substantial and pervasive changes to communication between businesses, organizations, communities and individuals. According to social media statistics, there are now about 3.2 billion users around the World. That is about 42% of World total population (Smith, 2019). Social media changes the way individuals and large organizations communicate.

The problem of insecurity is a global phenomenon. Insecurity is one of the major issues of concern that is attracting global attention and is fast threatening the corporate existence of many nations across the World. Since the September 11, 2001 terrorist attack on the World Trade Center and Pentagon in the United States of America, insecurity has been on the increase globally. In the African region, many countries have been engulfed with one security issue or the other. In Nigeria, the issue of boko haram, kidnapping, robbery, banditry, secession, hacking of bank accounts, etc, have in recent time constituted strong threat to national security (Nnoruka, 2017).

In Nigeria, over 87.37 per cent of social media activities are conducted on facebook. The National Communications Commission (NCC) attributes 74 per cent of this traffic 32,513,261 young Nigerians who use mobile devices. This new media eliminates the gate keeping mechanism of traditional media, which has allowed a large number of youth the freedom to communicate anonymously thereby resulting to direct hate filled comments to other Nigerians. Such actions generate and fuel hatred, which then leads to acts of individual and collective violence which pose significant threats to national security. Accordingly, the Nigeria Government adopted measures, including establishing the Nigeria Internet Registration Association and other organizations which censor content deemed offensive to the Nigerian community. Also, the National Assembly passed the Prohibition of Frivolous Petitions and Other Related Matters Act 2017, which was popularly termed the “social media bill” that aims to censor aspects of conduct on social media . These steps have failed to curtail hate speech, incitement to violence, and other criminal activities conducted over social media in Nigeria (The Nation Newspaper, 5th October, 2018)

As the insecurity situation continues unabated, the mass media has become a very potent tool in the hand of the government, the general public as well as the perpetrators of violence to get across to the public with the social media networks now taking a lead. The universality and limited restrictions of the cyber world have made a lot of people embrace it as a means of reaching out to the public in various ways. In Nigeria most people especially the youths are hooked to various social networks such as Facebook, Twitter, and 247 ureports.com, 2go, YouTube, WhatsApp, Instagram, etc. According to Professor Ben Ayade, the executive governor of Cross River State, “we won’t have the kind of peace we have now in the next 20 years if social media is allowed to destroy our country, and our value as those who publish horrible pictures should go to jail because animals are becoming more humans while humans are becoming more animalistic”(The Punch Newspaper, 15th November, 2019)



This research is anchored on the following objectives to ascertain whether social media have contributed to insecurity in Nigeria, to find out the social media network that has contributed more to insecurity in Nigeria. The following research questions were also formulated to guide the study; have social media contributed to insecurity in Nigeria? what social media network has contributed more to insecurity in Nigeria? The significance of this study is that, it is timely as it will not only contribute to the body of knowledge but also serve as a guide to government in tackling security challenges magnified by social media. From the above premise, this study focused on the impact of social media networks on insecurity in Nigeria.

2. Literature Review

Concept of Social Media

Social Media (SM) or Social Networking Sites (SNS) according to Adebayo (2012), is a kind of communication that takes place online, using some platform (website) such as Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, You Tube, Instagram, LinkedIn, etc, in which people can place messages and connect with others who are on the websites. These platforms usually require each participant to publish a “profile” that usually include a picture of the participant as well as any personal details that the participant want to share, thus forming an online identity that can be wholly created by the participant. The networking part of social media comes from the fact that these platforms usually involve some kind of grouping or categorization system that we all become participants connecting to many friends and followers in different ways and forming networks that range in size and scope from the very small and personal, to the vast, international and professional.

While their key technological features are consistent, the cultures that emerge around social networking sites are varied. Most sites support the maintenance of pre-existing social networks, but others help strangers connect based on shared interest, political views, or activities. With this, it is obvious that social media sites are based on interaction and communication with others (Uzorka; Obi; Umukoro; Uwegbu; &Odueh , 2015) .Social media are numerous, but for the sake of this study we gave brief overview of the different platforms and what benefits they can provide:

Facebook : It is a social networking site which allows participants to create a profile, search and receive friends request. Participants can upload profile pictures, tag pictures and comment on pictures of friends. It also gives participants the opportunity to upload and share information, either public or private. There is also room for privacy in which participants grant access to selected participants within his or her group of friends. Facebook has nearly 2.7 billion monthly active users who come from diverse backgrounds. There is also a nice balance of genders and age groups when it comes to Facebook’s user-base. This makes it a great social platform for businesses that are trying to reach a wider audience.

Instagram: Instagram is a great social media channel for brands that create a lot of visual content. Instagram’s audience tends to be on the younger side with more female users than male users. This can be a great platform for businesses selling products or services related to fashion, lifestyle, art, or other visual-focused industries.



Twitter: It is an online social network that asks participant to update their followers as to what they are doing in fewer than 140 characters. Some “twits” or choose to “tweet” many times a day to hundreds, and sometimes thousands of followers. Twitter has not less 321 million active users worldwide and tends to be where users go for news and trends. This platform is ideal for brands that want to join a conversation about trending topics in their industry.

LinkedIn: With LinkedIn, you can find, interact, and share content with people on different issues like politics, sports, business activities, etc.

YouTube: YouTube has become the second largest search engine in the world, second only to Google. You can upload your video content to this channel to help engage and connect with your audience. With unlimited video hosting, your business can post as much video content as you want and share through other channels.

Pinterest: Pinterest is another great channel for sharing image-focused content. This has become a must for consumers who are interested in DIY, crafts, home improvement, nutrition, fitness, fashion, and more. If your brand sells a product or service that lends well to imagery, then Pinterest may be worthwhile.

WhatsApp is a platform agonist. You do not need to own the same brand of phone as your call recipient or be on a specific platform- the app works with iPhone, Android, and Windows phones, and Mac or Windows desktop or laptop computers which you can use to send or receive messages. Like any other SMS messenger you can initiate a conversation with an individual or a video chat with up to four people.

NNG: The name comes from the website Ning.Com that provides free networking space for any group of people who want to form an online community. It takes only moments to set up and then other people who have joined. Ning is like Facebook in which participants create a profile and then post comments and questions to the group.

Theoretical Framework

Two theories served as theoretical framework. They are Technological Determinism Theory and the Media Equation Theory.

Technological Determinism Theory holds that changes in communication modes largely determine the course of history. McLuhan (1962) in this theory aim at drawing attention to the strength of communication technologies, it emphasizes the dimension of information craze in the society, as a direct result of the information explosion fostered by ICTs (Asemah, 2011). It is therefore safe to assume that social, historical, economic, and cultural changes occurring in human society today are because of development of new technologies. The basic premise of technological determinism theory is that the media are extensions of the human body and that the media not only alter their environment, but the very message they convey. The media bring new perceptual habits while their technologies create new environments. Based on this theory, people tend to think, behave and act because of what they have seen or heard from the media. It means that the kind of technology we use discharges how we react to situations around us. The use of multi-media phones now determines how people behave and interact with their environment. This theory is relevant to this study as it says new media technology creates new environment. Thus, the development of any given society is driven by technology.



The Media Equation Theory as noted by Griffin (2000), was developed by Byron Reeves and Clifford Nass in 1997. The theory proposes that media are equal to real life and that electronic media in particular are being given human attributes. In most cases, people talk to computers as if they were talking to human beings. In some cases, you talk to your television as if you are discussing with human beings. That is people have personalized the media of mass communication to the extent that they are seen the same way the theory sees human beings. Thus, Griffin (ibid) notes that media equate real life. He further note that what Reeves and Nass's equate suggests is that we respond to the communication media as if they were alive. This theory suggest that that people tend to treat computers, television and the new media like real life people and places.

The practical implication of the Media Equation is that once we turn on a television or boot up a computer, we follow all the rules of interpersonal interaction that we have précised throughout life. Thus, the word interface is particularly apt when describing human media relations. This natural social response goes way beyond occasional words yelled at the television set or our frantic play for the computer to retrieve lost data. Griffin further said that Reeves and Nass maintain that the media is so basic that it applies to everyone; it applies often and it is highly consequential. The above observation obviously captures how the audience members tend to engage the media in a discussion as they do with human beings. Therefore, the relevance of this theory to this study is that people treat the media like human beings, so whatever people see via the mass media, they tend to believe because they respond to the mass media, especially computers and television, the way they respond to human beings.

Insecurity in Nigeria

Insecurity Nigeria has been a major challenge that has bedeviled both past and present administration. The Aba riot, the Zango-Kataf, the Atem-Ityo, Boko Haram and other religious crises across the nation have often threatened the corporate existence of the country. Insecurity is one of the major factors impeding development in Nigeria. Since the emergence of democratic leadership in Nigeria, the greatest challenge of governing Nigeria has been posed by this menace. The state of insecurity in Nigeria is so alarming that some crime that were unthinkable and could not be associated with the country has become the order of the day. The height of terrorism by the Boko Haram Islamic sect, incidents of kidnapping in the southeast and South- South parts of the country, including agitations by militants in the Niger Delta have become "brands" of crime that have given a negative identity to Nigeria. This is in addition to other conventional crimes - theft, arson, violent ethno-religious conflicts, etc, which the law enforcement agents battle daily. All these have contributed in creating an alarming state of insecurity in some parts of the country (Nwabueze & Ebeze, 2013). Akpan, Ering and Adeoye (2013) averred that the media as the fourth estate of the realm is susceptible to manipulation positively and otherwise, regardless of place and time, and that this is partly why media-conflict study is gaining currency globally. They further noted that the role of the media in conflict prevention, resolution and escalation is now of global concern to both peace and conflict scholars and public policy makers. The point to note is that, social media could be a threat to national security and also serve as a tool in the hands of security agencies to combat insecurity. Social media has become a very potent tool in the hand of the government, the general public as well as the perpetrators of violence to get across to the public with the social networks. The



universality and limited restrictions of the cyber world have made a lot of people embrace it as a means of reaching out to the public in various ways.

Empirical Review

The empirical review is anchored on similar researches on carried out by Joshua and Chijioko (2018), and Nsudu and Onwe (2017), on national security. The first research sought to understand how social media (SM) platforms contribute towards the security challenges in the northern and south-eastern parts of Nigeria. Participants suggest that SM contributes towards rumour attacks (106; 31.6%), hate speech (94;28.1%) and others. The finding proves that SM contribute negatively towards various rumour attacks, promote hate speech, tribal clashes, and terror attacks. These leads to high levels of insecurity and threats to lives and properties in the northern and south-eastern regions and the country at large. The study again sought to find out whether SM contributes towards the advancement of Independent People of Biafra (IPOB) activities. Result shows that 73(43.5%) of the sampled respondents believe that SM contribute towards the progression of IPOB activities and events. The study found out that SM advances the social movement and agitation of IPOB organization.

According to Nsudu and Onwe (2017), SM platforms are used by separatists to spread their propaganda. Their study sought to know whether SM information promotes positive or negative views. The study reveals that 78(46.4%) of the respondents felt IPOB was labeled a terrorist organization due to information displayed and shown on social media. Overall, the study summarizes that SM information and events can be motivating factors towards the labeling of certain organization (IPOB) as terrorist group. This implies that information and events displayed on SM could be seen as influencing factors pushing government and its security agents to proscribe and label any anti-government movement as a terrorist organization. The study further sought to know whether dedicated servers and websites are used to spread their propaganda. Result shows that they use the medium for recruitment, fund raising, and as training mechanism and other forms of cybercrime. Again, the study reveal that 104(17.2%) suggest that SM mainly facilitates propaganda, and threats of violence are suggested by 98(16.2%). The IPOB displays their activities on Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp. The activities of Boko Haram are displayed on different SM platforms bythe media and individuals as they get hold of this information. Overall, participants suggest that the use of SM can facilitate propaganda, threats of violence, mobilization, recruitment process, radicalization of ideology, insecurity, training, and many more. All these factors in return lead to social, economic, and political insecurity where lives and properties are endangered.

3. Methodology

This study is a combination of empirical study and literature research. The study used survey method of research. One hundred and ninety six(196) respondents were randomly drawn from five schools in Delta State Polytechnic, Ogwashi-Uku, Nigeria(School of Business Studies; School of Applied Sciences; School of Engineering; School of Arts and Design; and School of General Studies). The respondents were staff and students of the Polytechnic. The research is anchored on both primary and secondary sources of data. The primary data were generated through questionnaire administered on sampled respondents



4. Result

The data generated were analyzed and presented in tables in line with the stated objectives of the research.

Table 1: Responses on whether Social Media have contributed to Insecurity in Nigeria

Statement	SA	A	UD	D	SD	Total
Social media have contributed to the security challenges in Nigeria.	90	70	6	21	9	196
There is no link between social media and security challenges in Nigeria.	9	21	5	50	110	196
The security challenges in Nigeria and indeed the entire World would be reduced if the social media contents are regulated.	80	65	3	33	15	196
Some contents in the social media were generated to cause chaos.	91	70	0	10	19	196
People have come to accept and believe the messages in the social media and based on this, they are able to cause problem in the society.	60	87	0	40	9	196

Source: Field survey, 2019

Table 2: Responses on the Social Medial Network that has Contributed more to Insecurity in Nigeria

Social Media	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Facebook	88	45
Twitter	24	12
WhatsApp	72	37
Instagram	8	4
You tube	4	2
Total	196	100

Source: Field survey, 2019

Discussions and Findings

Majority of the respondents claim that social media have in no small way contributed to insecurity in Nigeria. This is perhaps because everyone is free to post information in the social media such as facebook, twitter, whatsapp, instagram, etc, without any form of censorship. People now practice journalism without any form of training. Individuals can post pictures that can bring about sentiments, which may in turn lead to crisis. People now use the social media network to send all sort of alarming messages without minding the consequences. This according to McQuail (2005), is because it is still difficult to find a better means of regulating the new media.

Furthermore, findings show that of the social media network, the Facebook and WhatsApp are the ones that cause insecurity more than others. Through Facebook, WhatsApp, and other social media sites, people study and learn about one another, discuss or talk about issues and methodologies and defy each other in that process. Facebook is the fastest developing social network site particularly popular with people between the age of 25 years and 55 years Worldwide. In many cases, it is just a way for people to keep in touch with one another and



exchange news and photographs. It is interesting to know that young people prefer it as a source of news and information rather than listening to radio or watching television.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

This study appraised the effect of social media networks on insecurity in Nigeria. These new media are desperate set of communication technologies that share certain features made possible by digitalization and widely available for personal use as communication devices. The new media are not only or mainly concerned with the production and distribution of messages, but also concerned with processing, exchange and storage. Having thoroughly examined the subject matter, the study concluded that social media networks have contribution greatly to insecurity in Nigeria and that Facebook and WhatsApp networks contributed more to national insecurity.

From the findings and conclusion of the study, the researchers therefore recommended that there should be an encompassing national legislations (laws guiding the use of social media) that would attract strong sanctions on violators. The audience and users of social media should be well educated on the dangers of using social media to portray negative vices. Social media networks should be used to promote national security in Nigeria instead of using them as tools for fanning the ember of insecurity.

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