

10

AN APPRAISAL OF THE SOCIAL MEDIA AND INSECURITY IN NIGERIA

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Introduction

The mass media generally have a very important role to play in modern democratic society as basic channels of communication. Thus, the members of the public rely on them not only as the main sources of information, but as also, the basis on which they form their opinions on events that take place in the society. This implies that people rely on the mass media to know what is happening in their environment (Asemah, 2011). 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. Social network is a new technology through which people communicate and interact freely with the rest of the world.

Social network is a social structure made up of individuals or organisations called “nodes”, which are tied (connected) by one or more specific types of interdependency, such as friendship, kinship, common interest, financial exchange, dislike, sexual relationships or relationships of beliefs, knowledge or prestige (Adeboye, 2012). Social networks can also be referred to as a map of specified ties, such as friendship, between the nodes being studied. The nodes to which an individual is thus connected are the social contacts of that individual; the network can also be used to measure social capital – the value that an individual gets from the social network. Social networking sites include: Yahoo Messenger, *Facebook* Messenger, Blackberry Messenger (BBM), Google talk, Google+Messenger, iPhone, Androids and so on.

These networking sites are used by most people to interact with old and new friends, physical or Internet friends (Adeboye, 2012).

Social media like the traditional media, play different roles in the society; these roles may be positive or negative. It is in line with this that this study set out to examine social media influence on national security in Nigeria.

Objectives of the Chapter and Key Questions

1. To ascertain whether social media have contributed to insecurity in Nigeria.
2. To find out the extent to which social media have contributed to insecurity in Nigeria.
3. To find out the social media network that has contributed more to insecurity in Nigeria

Based on the objectives, the following research questions have been drawn to guide the chapter:

1. Have social media contributed to insecurity in Nigeria?
2. To what extent have social media contributed to insecurity in Nigeria?
3. What social media network has contributed more to insecurity in Nigeria?

Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

Two theories serve as the 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 aimed at drawing attention to the strength of communication technologies. This emphasises the dimension of information craze in the society, as a direct result of the information explosion fostered by ICTs (Asemah, 2011b). 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. That is, our actions and behaviour are products of new technology. According to Asemah

(2011b) the basic premise of technological determinism theory is that the media are extensions of the human body. He further explains 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 dictates how we react to situations around us. The use of multi- media phones now determine how people behave, react and interact with their environment. The theory is relevant to the study in the sense that it says new media technologies create 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. 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 our television as if we are discussing with human beings. That is, people have personalised the media of mass communication to the extent that they about the same way they see human beings. Thus, Griffin (2000) notes that media equate real life. He further notes that what Reeves and Nass's equation suggests is that we respond to the communication media as if they were alive. This theory suggests that people tend to treat computers, television and the new media like real people and places. Going by the media equation theory, we tend to give human attributes to inanimate objects in our homes. According to Griffin (2000, p. 373):

The practical implication of the media equation is that once we turn on a television or boot up on 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. Reeves and Nass maintain that the media equation is so basic that it applies to everyone; it applies often and it is highly consequential.

The above observation aptly captures how the audience members tend to engage the media in a discussion as they do with human beings. The relevance of this theory to this discourse cannot be overemphasised. People treat the media like human beings, so whatever people see via the media, they tend to believe because they respond to the mass media, especially computers and television, the way they respond to human beings.

Conceptual Understanding of Social Networking Sites

According to Kist (2010), cited in Adeboye (2012), “social networking is a kind of communication that takes place online, using some kind of platform (website) such as *Facebook*, *Twitter* or *Ning* in which people can place messages and connect with others who are on the websites”. He further explains that these platforms usually require each participant to publish a “profile” that usually includes a picture of the participant, as well as any personal details that the participant wants to share, thus forming an online identity that can be wholly created by the participant. The “networking” part of social networking comes from the fact that these platforms usually involve some kind of grouping or categorisation system so 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 networking sites are based on interaction and communication with others (Boyd and Ellison, 2007, cited in Adeboye, 2012). Social networking sites are numerous, but for the purpose of this study, a few of the sites will be exploited for better understanding of social networking. The social networking sites are:

a. *Twitter*: It is an online social network that asks participants to update their “followers” as to what they are doing in fewer than 140 characters. Some “twits” choose to “tweet” many times a day to hundreds, and sometimes thousands of followers.

b. *Facebook*: It is a social networking site which allows participant to create a profile, search and receive friend requests. Participant can upload profile pictures, tags pictures and comment on pictures of friends. It also gives participant the opportunity to upload and share information, either public or private. There is also room of privacy in which participants grant access to selected participants within his or her group of friends.

c. *NING*: 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 those who want to join the Ning are able to communicate with other people who have joined. Ning is like Facebook in which participants create a profile and then post comments and questions to the group. Setting up of Ning is free and also, there is an age requirement- children under 13years cannot participate.

d. *WIKIS*: The word is from Hawaii, which means “quick”. Wikis has become essential for collaborative writing done in an online environment. Anyone can set up his or her own wiki, focusing on any topic of choice. There are many platforms

available to host wikis, such as wikispaces.com or PBwiki.com. The person who sets up the wiki determines who is allowed to contribute to whatever text is being cocreated there. Famous example of wikis is Wikipedia.org. There are also platforms that simply store a group's commonly used documents.

e. Blogs and Blogging: Blogs are basically online journals or “logs”. Over the years, the earlier name (Weblog) has been shortened to “blog”. There are several free platforms for hosting a blog, giving anyone who wants it a potential instant worldwide audience. A blog can be setup in any number of ways, but the essential components are the entries themselves, which are very similar to page, based diary entries, with all of the range of length style and content that one would get in any personal journal. What makes blogging a part of Internet is their interactive nature. There is also a link following each entry of a blog for readers to leave comments about the entry.

f. Blackberry Messenger (BBM): This application is for Blackberry users only. It is an inbuilt application on blackberry phones that enable people with blackberry communicate with one another free, thereby creating a kind of community for users only. Users could also upload pictures, send and accept friend request. The whole essence is to enable users send and receive instantaneous messages.

Internet: The Bedrock of Social Networks

After knowing the concept of social networking, another important concept is the Internet, which is the bedrock of social networking sites. Without the Internet, social networking sites will cease to exist. Roger (1997) explains the initial aim of the Internet thus:

The original purpose of the Internet was to facilitate the electronic exchange of research, programming, mail and other

information among educators and researchers. It evolved in ways no one planned or expected, once the military relinquished Internet development and funding responsibilities to civilian organisations in the early 1980s.

The Internet is interactive in nature, but this latest iteration of the Internet has featured an intensified level of what has come to be called “social networking”. The kind of community building across Internet groups, demographics and nationalities, has transformed the way we connect with strangers, loved ones, friends, colleagues and even ourselves. Bruks, Mehnert, Prommer, and Rader (2008), cited in Adebayo (2012) aver that the Internet is part of our everyday life for the reason that we do the same in the Internet as in real life, probably in a more efficient, faster and cheaper way. The Internet, according to Agba (2002, p. 253):

Is the most technologically advanced medium of communication. It is a multimedia information superhighway that facilitates business, sports, politics, entertainment and other endeavours across international boundaries. It is a technological revolution of monumental capabilities. In fact, it is the information revolution that has turned the world into a global village. It is man’s most ambitious attempt to miniaturise the physical planet, earth. It is an interactive medium.

Morris and Ogan (1996), cited in Asemah (2011c, p. 109) describe the complex and multifaceted nations thus:

Internet communication takes many forms; from World Wide Web pages operated by major news organisations to Usenet groups discussing folk or music to E-mail messages among colleagues and friends. The Internet's communication forms can be understood as a continuum. Each point in the traditional model of communication process can, in fact, vary from one to a few-many on the Internet. Sources of the messages can range from one person in E-mail communication, to a social group in a Listserv or Usenet group to a group of professional journalists in World Wide Web page. The messages themselves can be traditional journalistic news stories created by a reporter and editor, stories created over a long period of time by many people, or simply conversations, such as in an Internet Relay Chat group. The receivers or audiences of these messages can also number from one to potentially millions and may or may not move fluidly from their role as audience-members to producers of messages.

With its multifarious features and uses, the Internet provides a unique forum for anybody to be both producer and consumer of information. It allows for the free flow of information without any form of barrier currently suffered by the old media. We have the World Wide Web (www) and the electronic mail (E-Mail) as some of the features of the Internet. www involves a graphical hypertext based multimedia platform. This implies that it allows still and motion pictures and text presentations, which can be made to suite various dimensions. The World Wide Web is a location on the Internet. Researchers can get lot of materials on WWW. The researchers use the search tool or the search engine. Electronic mail is used for transmitting and storing messages electronically. With e-mail, one can send and receive messages through one's computer. These messages may be in form of text, graphics, video, journals, etc. Each person has a designated mailbox that stores messages sent by other users (Keghku, 2005).

Method

The survey research design was adopted in carrying out this work while the questionnaire served as the instrument of data collection. The purposive sampling technique was used to select four areas in Lokoja: Adankolo, Lokongoma phase I, Lokongoma phase II and new layout. The simple random sampling technique was used to select four hundred (400) respondents from the four areas. The researcher considered the population of the study to include the male and females in Lokoja Local Government Area of Kogi State, Nigeria. The population of Lokoja Local government Area as at 2006 National population census figures stood at one hundred and ninety five thousand two hundred and sixty-one (195,261) people. Thus, the universe was 195, 261. To

determine the sample size of the study, Taro Yamane (1964) 's statistical method was used. It goes thus:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + \frac{N}{e^2}}$$

$$n = \frac{195,261}{1 + \frac{195,261}{(0.05)^2}}$$

$$n = \frac{195,261}{1 + 488.1525}$$

$$n = \frac{195,261}{489.1525}$$

$$n = 399.18$$

Therefore, the sample size was 399.18 approximated to 400. Thus, four hundred (400) copies of the questionnaire were distributed while three hundred and eighty (380) copies were retrieved and which analysis was based on.

Data Presentation

Table 1: Showing the responses on whether new media have contributed to insecurity in Nigeria.

S/N	Statements	SA	A	U D	D	S D	T o t a l	Deci sion
1	Social media have contributed to the security challenges in Nigeria	162	91	4	60	63	366	Acce pted
2	There is no link between social media and the security challenges in Nigeria	59	44	0	99	178	22	Reje cted

3	The security challenges in Nigeria, and indeed, the entire world would be reduced if the social media contents are regulated	168	1 2 9	0	3 2	51	3. 8	Acce pted
4	Most contents in the social media were generated to cause chaos	165	1 0 3	0	6 5	47	3. 7	Acce pted
5	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	167	1 1 5	4	5 8	36	3. 8	Acce pted

Table one sought to know whether social have actually contributed to security challenges in Nigeria. Out of the 5 items, 4 were accepted while 1 was rejected. Item 1 translates to 3.6, showing that social media have contributed to security challenges in Nigeria, item 2 translates to 2.2, showing that there is a link between social media and security issues in Nigeria, item 3 translates to 3.8, showing that security challenges in Nigeria and indeed, the entire world will reduce if the social media are regulated, item 4 translates to 3.7, indicating that most information in the social media are super imposed while item 5, which translates to 3.8 shows that people have come to accept and believe the messages in the social media and this is why it is possible for them to cause confusion in the society.

Table 2. Responses on the extent to which social media have caused insecurity in Nigeria

Responses	Frequency	Percentages
Very Great Extent	168	44%
Great Extent	154	41%
Not at all	Nil	Nil%
Low Extent	20	5%
Very Low Extent	38	10%
Total	380	100%

The result of the analysis shows that the extent to which social media have contributed to insecurity in Nigeria is great. A sizeable percentage (84%) of the respondents was of the opinion that it was to a great extent.

Table 3. Responses on the social media network that has contributed more to insecurity in Nigeria

Social Meeting	Frequency	Percentages
<i>Facebook</i>	200	53%
<i>Twitter</i>	22	6%
2go	77	20%
My Space	33	9%
Netlog	48	12%
Total	380	100%

Discussion of Findings

The findings show that social media have contributed to the security challenges in Nigeria. This is evident in Table 1 where majority of the respondents claimed that social media have in a way contributed to security problems in Nigeria. This is perhaps because everyone is free to post information in the social media, such as *Facebook*, *Twitter*, etc, without any form of censorship. Citizens now practice journalism without any form of training required. Thus, citizen journalists 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.

The findings show that the extent to which social media have caused insecurity in Nigeria is great. This implies that social media network have actually contributed to insecurity in Nigeria. Social media have negative effects. They have become a haven

for uncensored, free-wheeling discussions on everything, from sexual fantasies, to religious dogmas. Many users strongly believe that the Internet is a much better vehicle for free speech and public debate, than any of the other existing forms of communication media, but the fact remains that the medium has now become so difficult to control. Rather, its controlling us (the users). All the things that are prevented by the traditional media through regulation and censorship are difficult to regulate on the Internet because of the freedom and no law guiding the cyberspace. The Internet is deceptive in nature; since it is possible to change identity, pictures, voice and sex through the Internet. A single person can now have two identities on the Internet. Posted information on the Internet sometimes cannot be verified. The increasing use of social media has led to greater privacy challenges. The right of an individual to his or her private life has been reduced immensely.

The findings also show that of the social media network, the *Facebook* is the one that causes insecurity more. People use the *Facebook* to interact. *Facebook* is an online doings or pastime that will obtain a few times. Through *Facebook* and other social media sites, we will study or learn about each one of us, discuss or talk about concern or issues and methodologies and defy each other. *Facebook* is the fast developing social networking site, particularly popular with people under the age of 40, with nearly 500 million users worldwide. In many cases, it is just a way for people to keep in touch with one another and exchange news and photographs. Increasingly, young people prefer it as a source of news and information rather than listening to radio or watching television.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study set out to examine the social media networks and security challenges. The new media are a disparate set of communication technologies that share certain features apart from

being new, made possible by digitisation and being widely available for personal use as a communication device. The new media are not only or mainly concerned with the production and distribution of messages, but at least, mainly concerned with processing, exchange and storage. The new media are as much an institution of private, as of public communication and are unregulated. Their operations are not typically professional or bureaucratically organised to the same degree as the mass media. These are significant differences that underscore the fact that the new media correspond with the mass media primarily in being widely diffused, in principle available to all for communication and at least, free from control. Social media have a higher capacity regarding transmission, which overcomes the former restrictions of cost, distance and capacity. There is also room for interactivity; as the receiver can select, answer back, exchange and be linked to other receivers directly. In addition, there is flexibility in deciding on content and usage patterns. Social media among others include *Facebook*, *Twitter*, *2go*, etc. Based on the findings, we conclude that the social media have actually contributed to the insecurity in Nigeria. Based on the findings and conclusion, we recommend that the audience and users of social media should be educated on the dangers of using the social media to portray negative vices. People now treat the media as human beings, so they tend to believe whatever they come across in the media; youths, especially should moderate the kind of messages they send through the social media. Social media networks should therefore be used to

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