

## Exploring the Application of Social Media in Governance in Nigeria

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### Abstract

*Social media have great impact across diverse areas of social life, it can be said that the greatest sphere of influence impacted upon is political communication and democracy. Given the view that modern day democracy is not working, that the citizenry is increasingly disengaging from civic life and political participation, therefore, democracy requires information-rich environment through which citizens come to know vital issues of the day, as well as spaces for robust critical-rational conversations on matters of concern. Both are essential for forming public opinion. Social media like the internet thus offer hope and critical lifelines for the prospects of democracy. The paper used Technological Determinism Theory to supports this discussion because the theory states that media technology shapes how individuals in a society think, feel, act and how the society operates as people move from one technological age to another. The paper argued that the emergence of social media in the last few decades has made it the centre of social interactions, surpassing contributions of any other innovations in the history of mass media. Generally, information is necessary for effective modern social, economic and political development; social media has made people, being the sources, the processors as well as the end users of all information. The paper concludes that information is power, information is the engine room for meaningful and sustainable development and information is also the catalyst for effective social interaction. One of the biggest benefits accruable from the use of social media is the inherent freedom of expression.*

### Keywords

Application, Exploring, Governance, Nigeria and Social media



### I. Introduction

Social media has democratized and personalised acquisition purveyance and distribution of information aided by the powerful networks of internet communication. Social media enabled, the internet, to redefine and re-pattern human communication. A matrix of communication media, which transcend national boundaries, has now been facilitated by the internet. As a result increasing numbers of technological-savvy citizens hook up via the information superhighway. Over the last decade, Nigerians have also migrated online using a variety of social media platforms. According to Ogbuoshi et al., in Owens-Ibie and Aondover (2024) ninety-eight million Nigerians are online. Nigeria is thus the largest internet-using African nation. With this massive online presence and vibrancy of activities engaged in by Nigerians on social media, it is to be expected that social media

texts-tweets, posts, comments, pictures, videos and online discussion become sources and channels of communication among the public (Ahmed & Msughter, 2022).

Social media have great impact across diverse areas of social life, it can be said that the greatest sphere of influence impacted upon is political communication and democracy. Given the view that modern day democracy is not working, that the citizenry are increasingly disengaging from civic life and political participation, therefore, democracy requires information-rich environment through which citizens come to know vital issues of the day, as well as spaces for robust critical-rational conversations on matters of concern. Both are essential for forming public opinion. Social media like the internet thus offer hope and critical lifelines for the prospects of democracy (Aondover et al., 2022).

According to Kietzmann in Aondover et al., (2023) the internet's pro-democratic potentials includes the promise to "provide an improved forum for debate, it involves geographically disparate citizens, where issues of relevance matter, social status is less important and arguments are evaluated based on their strength." Invariably, social media, being the most conspicuous aspect of web 2.0 architecture provides rich information environment as well as tendencies for instantaneous and deliberative communication upon which democracy can blossom. Therefore, governments recognized the importance of Internet and started to provide their services electronically using social media. This initiative was to increase the performance of government services provided to different stakeholders (citizens, businesses and government itself). As the Internet evolved, the government also evolved in the same direction and witnessed a move from government services over social media such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and Flickr, among others (Aondover & Pate, 2021).

The rapid development of both technology and knowledge makes "social media" to change at a rapid rate, as new websites and online contents appear each day. Kietzmann et al., in Aondover and Pate (2021) viewed social media as interactive platforms, which individuals and communities create and share user-generated content. Social media technologies take on different forms including magazines, Internet forums, weblogs, social blogs, micro-blogging, wikis, social networks, podcasts, photographs or pictures, video, rating and social bookmarking. These social media platforms differ according to the extent to which they focus as functional building blocks of the society namely identity, conversations, sharing, presence, relationships, reputation, and groups (Aondover, 2019).

Aondover et al., (2022) observed that social media platforms and related technologies have enabled a revolution in user-generated content, global community and the publishing of consumer opinion, now uniformly tagged as social media. Both the government and the governed do express their minds about the issues that affect the society through social media platforms. During the last democratic administration, interviewers used Twitter, a social media platform as a means of getting Nigerians to ask ex-president Goodluck Jonathan questions about certain decisions and policies of his administration during his quarterly presidential media chat in 2013. It can be said that the social media, irrespective of the access to it, can be used as a platform by which the government and the governed interact with each other. It is used by the people not only to maintain peace in the society but also to express their minds and views on issues so that a compromise can be reached for the betterment of the Nigerian society.

Modern technology in communication has no doubt helped to serve as a means of people and as a medium of interaction in the social world. Consequently, government and the governed have been exploring the exciting opportunities that technologies have

brought. Technology has changed the way people interact and has brought about the emergence of an open social platform in the form of social media. This allows persons to easily connect with each other, thereby making the world a global village. The advent of social media has impacted significantly use on the government and the governed as a means of making connections for various purposes. Idris and Msughter (2022) observed that the use of social media platforms has impacted positively on individuals through creating diversification between different categories of people. Some of the popular social media platforms are Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, MySpace, Instagram, LinkedIn and Google Plus, among others. Today, social media is used by the government and the governed as a platform where the government connects with their governed across the globe (Kurfi et al., 2021).

As Odoemelum and Adibe in Maikaba and Aond suggest, a discourse on the role of social media on political participation between the government and the governed is often times influenced by the public sphere paradigm. They observed that the idea of the public sphere has grown in importance, owing to the interactivity introduced in the media of communication and propelled by advances in ICT as witnessed in the internet offerings like: Facebook, Twitters You-tube, Email, etc and wireless communication, such as the GSM (Maikaba & Msughter, 2019).

Social media have shown a rapid growth of user counts and have been object of scientific analysis (Wigand et al., 2010). For example, more than 800 million people worldwide are members of the Facebook network while Twitter counts more than 200 million accounts. The mainstream adoption of social media applications has changed the physics of information diffusion. Until a few years ago, the major barrier for someone who wanted a piece of information to spread through a community was the cost of the technical infrastructure required to reach a large number of people. Today, with widespread access to the Internet, this bottleneck has largely been removed. In this context, personal publishing modalities such as Social Network Sites (SNS), Microblogging, and Weblogs have become prevalent (Mojaye & Aondover, 2022). The process by which people locate, organize and coordinate groups of individuals with similar interests, the number and nature of information and news sources available and the ability to solicit and share opinions and ideas across various topics have all undergone dramatic change with the rise of social media (Msughter, 2023).

As a result, the growing relevance of communication in social media implies a fundamental change in traditional public communication, which has usually been exclusively initiated and managed by specific actors, e.g., politicians, companies as well as journalists (Chadwick, 2006). This phenomenon is currently observed by numerous disciplines, such as sociology, information communication studies, information systems, political science and linguistics. Among other fields of interest, it is a common goal to better understand modes of communication, such as agenda setting or opinion making in social media. Today, telling stories to the general public, providing crucial information and influencing perceptions is no longer a preserve of traditional media. The difference remains that social media because of its unregulated nature can disseminate news without any filter or direct control while traditional media houses still perform the function of an intermediary who filters, analyses and explains information before it goes public (Msughter & Aondover, 2023).

Although studies by Suntain and Targema (2017) have shown that social media are essential social forces that lubricate the engine room of democracy in Africa and are no doubt, revolutionizing the process of political communication and expanding the frontiers of political participation. Yet, other research by Borah (2016) has shown that social media

are sometimes used inappropriately by political aspirants and their supporters, which affect the fairness in political campaigns and processes at large. Supporting this view, Suntai and Targema (2017) remarked that although social media provides a medium to facilitate democracy in Nigeria, yet, in the build-up to the 2015 general elections, the platforms were deployed to perpetuate campaigns of calumny against candidates with opposing views, which almost divided the country into the extremes of the Muslim-North and Christian-South. This implies that electoral crises and squabbles between contestants have taken on new dimensions due to the influence of social media (Msughter & Idris, 2023). The above views suggest that there have been an increasing number of considerable researches on the use of social media in political campaigns in Nigerian with mixed findings. In this regard, scholars have widely appreciated and critiqued the impact of social media on political processes and campaign in Nigeria. It is, therefore, worthwhile to put forward and corroborate literature on the use of social media platforms for governance in Nigeria.

## II. Review of Literature

### Theoretical Underpinning

Technological Determinism Theory was propounded by Thorstein Veblen. The theory supports this study because the theory states that media technology shapes how individuals in a society think, feel, act and how the society operates as people move from one technological age to another. The theory has various assumptions, which he broke down into individual interpretations, Metatheoretical assumptions, which cover ontological assumptions, epistemological assumptions and axiological assumptions (Onyejelem & Aondover, 2024a).

The theory postulates that in individual interpretations, people learn, feel and think the way they do because of the messages they receive through the current technology that is available. The radio required people to only listen and develop their sense of hearing. On the other hand, television engages both hearing and visual senses. People then transfer those developed senses into everyday lives and they want to use them again. The medium is then the message. This to an extent seems to be closely related to the agenda setting theory, which describes the ability (of the social media) to influence the salience of topics on the public agenda.

That is, if a news item is covered frequently and prominently the audience will regard the issue as more important. The innovations that affect the media especially in the area of online technology have to a large extent influenced some of the notable changes in the society. The types of phones that were used to communicate back then are now advanced and have been a major tool used to influence the way communication is done these days. Taking a look at some other assumptions of the theory sheds lighter on the role the changes in technology has on the media as well as media consumers (Onyejelem & Aondover, 2024b).

Humans do not have much free will at all. Whatever society as a whole is using to communicate, they too will use to communicate. Therefore, they will adapt to the medium they are using so that they can send and receive messages like everyone else. People know that there is one truth by observing what has happened over time. As the medium changes so does society's way of communicating. People can only use the medium for which it was created (phone for talking over lines or electronic mail for talking via computer). If the medium is impersonal (social media) then the message too is impersonal (Chinedu-Okeke et al., 2021; Adeyemi et al., 2024).

This theory is objective as everyone will act and feel the same no matter what the medium, they are using provided they are using the same medium. Values are not involved because evidence is seen strictly through observation (Ezeonyejiaku & Onyejelem, 2021). The assumptions of the theory to a large extent have great influence on the society however some critics have identified certain faults with the theory, they are highlighted below:

- a. Explanatory Power: it explains when new systems of technology are developed; the culture or society is immediately changed to reflect the senses needed to use the new technology.
- b. Predictive Power: it predicts that with every new system of media technology, society will change and adapt to that technology.
- c. Parsimony: there is a simple cause and effect analysis between the introduction of new technology and the changes in society's way of thinking, feeling, acting, or believing.
- d. Falsifiability: the theory could be proved false if a new technology is invented and nothing changes.
- e. Internal Consistency: there is a logical flow of proof evidenced over time.
- f. Heuristic Provocativeness: would this theory only work in the USA or would it vary culture to culture within or outside the United States? Does it vary in the electronic age between those who can afford the new technology and those who cannot?
- g. Organizing Power: we know that we have developed and we know that we have changed. This theory provides a way to see why this has happened.

Taking a lot at the criticism of this theory it is safe to assume that as much as the changing technology affects the various mass media it is not a sole requirement to changing the way humans think, feel or act, there are other factors that could also influence the way people behave the way they do (Aondover et al., 2024). However, it should be noted that the various technological developments in the Nigerian society have brought about an improvement and change in the way the various traditional mass media operates, thus, the theory is considered in this study.

### **III. Results and Discussion**

#### **3.1 Digital Media and Politics**

Information system research has generated important insights into media and their role in electioneering, prominent ICT scholars like Chadwick and Galley (2014) have suggested that it should now be joined by fresh analysis of the role of digital media in international election campaigns, which would connect the study of digital media explicitly with questions concerning democracy and power, and elections (These questions include how and to what extent digital media has changed the organisational characteristics of campaigns and democratic institutions responsible for conducting elections and the roles media could play in shaping voter activation (Msughter et al., 2023). Democratic theories have shown that elections are important component of democracy. Through voting, people can voice their opinions, express their hopes and aspirations, discipline their leaders and ultimately control their nation's destiny.

According to Castell (2012) free, impartial and frequent elections constitute a form of popular government and are due, in part, to demands for inclusion and participation in political life. Some commentators noted that elections are also the public's source of power, but in order to use it most effectively, the public must know where candidates and

parties stand on public policy issues. The media is often seen as a medium, positioned to enthrone good governance and complement these activities through its watchdog roles.

Academic literature by Bimber in Namadi and Aondover (2020) shows that digital media is playing an important role in the processes and outcome of conducting elections. Bimber, a professor of political science at the University of California, noted that “election campaigns nowadays are regarded as communication campaigns” (In policy-advocacy arenas, in citizen participation, and campaign coordination, the digital media revolution has already led to demonstrable changes in the structure and strategy of political organising around the world (Bennett & Segerberg, 2013). Facebook, Twitter and other new media applications, widely used by young people, are been seen as a potential vehicle to re-engage youth in political debate.

The potential utility of such applications for creating networked public groupings and mobilising political action was highlighted recently where Facebook and Twitter were used (e.g. in the United States) to target potential youth voters. For instance, Bimber (2015) noted that President Obama’s use of ICT in 2008 and 2012 has changed American politics reminiscent of just the way Kennedy used television to change the face of American politics. Candidates willing to contesting for a political position showcase their policies, achievements and manifesto for the wider public to decide whether to vote for them. In addition, Bimber (2015) maintains that increased use of digital media in their campaign strategy have become a medium for contacting with voters, setting out and responding to issues and encouraging the voters out to cast their vote, and therefore determines who is likely win an election.

In the 2008 elections, the presidential candidate for the Republican Party, Senator Mc Cain confession of his computer and digital illiteracy neither endeared him to the youth vote nor presented him as a youthful minded candidate. Despite the fact that Romney, the republican presidential candidate in 2012 used a Twitter handle to communicate with citizens in the 2012 election, his usage was more ham-fisted not as prevalent as that of President Obama. Many commentators believed that Obama’s policy and achievements were more extensive than that of Romney and played a key role in winning votes particularly youths and mostly women (Taiwo et al., 2024).

In the European context, Hansen and Kosiara-Pederson (2014) find variation in adaptation across parties in Denmark, while Koc-Michalska et al., (2014) argue that, in France, weaker parties have adapted to the new environment as effectively as have their larger, richer counterparts. Similarly, Segerberg in Koc-Michalska et al., (2014) found that in a state-level German election, the personal experience of candidates with digital media predicts the sophistication of their campaigns’ use of new media tools, hence giving room for voters to directly engage with politicians willing to stand for a public office. Segerberg in Hansen and Kosiara-Pederson (2014) also reported an interesting finding that the use of social media in the 2011 Finnish parliamentary elections was nonetheless influential for some citizens even though SNS use had little impact on voting decisions in general. However, from a different perspective Koc-Michalska et al., (2014) show, in Poland, parties and candidates have adapted by offering more personalised images to citizens while also trying to limit the citizen interaction and expression that are facilitated by the digital media environment.

Views on the influence of the Internet on civic and political life in democratic regimes differ. At the extremes, one can point to pessimists who see it as a distraction or impediment to democracy and optimists who view it as the means to regenerate political life. One of the debates that have regularly featured the literature on Web campaigns has been the so-called normalization versus equalization argument. Simply put, this refers to

the use of new media increasing the power of the minor players and strengthening the role of the grassroots as opposed to simply reinforcing the power of the major parties and existing elites. As parties, candidates, and citizens all expand their use of the medium of social media, a call has been made by prominent scholars for a review of global practices in e-campaigns and particularly a revisiting of these four major foci that have occupied the heart of academic discussion on the topic, namely diffusion, democratization, normalization, and mobilisation in newly democratic countries.

The African context is unique in assisting in such a research inquiry. Election fraud and abuses are common in rural and urban areas. International monitors are incapable of covering each countryside district, so national and local elections were often marred by significant fraud and the culprits remained confident they would not be exposed. With no concrete evidence of ballot stuffing, voter violence, or other tricks of the ruling party's cronies, there was very little that authorities could do to take action on such events, from domestic and international viewpoints. Hearsay and conjecture are unlikely to ever bring down a government, or bring about international sanctions. However, documented human rights abuses and confirmed electoral discrepancies certainly can bring about international attention. For instance, in the case of Zimbabwe, it not surprising that despite Robert Mugabe carrying out much of the same political strategy employed since he ordered his Red Brigade into Matabeleland to crush dissenters in the 1980s; it is only recently that the world has begun to take notice of Zimbabwe's political crisis. The growth in international interest in Zimbabwe's situation closely mirrors the acceleration of mobile penetration on the continent. Now, with a broadband mobile connection and a camera phone, election monitoring quickly becomes a task everyone can take part in.

### **3.2 Social Media and Nigeria's Politics**

In the Nigerian context particularly, Nigeria's path toward democratic rule has been fraught with electoral problems. Nigeria's record of economic development and political stability has been slow and erratic (Usman et al., 2022). In her visit to Nigeria in 2007, Hilary Clinton, noted that Nigeria is considered one of the most corrupt countries in the world. Wide-spread voter fraud was reported in Nigeria's last two general elections conducted in 2007, which saw the hegemonic ruling party retain power for Nigeria's sixteen years of democracy. Accusations of missing ballot boxes, inflated voter counts and even voters being shot at polling stations were made by the opposition candidate. Although Nigeria continues to have a television and radio-centric style of political information, political uses of the Web have increased since the exponential growth of social networking sites, and especially Facebook, Twitter and local Nigerian blogs and websites.

The turning point for social media as a tool for political engagement in Nigeria was 2010. In May of that year, the former President joined Facebook. Arguably, it was a potent endorsement of social media platforms in a country more populous than any other country on the African continent. In 2011 the president declared his intention on Facebook to re-run for the presidency. He published two books via Facebook titled "My friends and I: Conversations on Policy and Governance" and "Bring Back the Book" detailing the feedback he garnered during the electioneering campaigns of 2011, stressing the need to re-ignite the dwindling reading culture among Nigerians and particularly the youth, who form the majority of Facebook users. Since then, social media applications have changed how information is, and consequently, "citizens accessed information directly and more accurately, resulting in unsurpassed participation in politics during the 2011 elections and participating in public affairs" (Yar'Adua et al., 2023).

In Nigeria, in 2007 and 2011 respectively, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) adopted direct data capture technology (DDCT) to register eligible voters and revalidate the voter list throughout the federation. The purpose was to thwart moves by unscrupulous politicians to manipulate the registration of voters to their advantage. According to the INEC's Director of Public Affairs, "the change from an Optical Mark Reading System to the DDC was because of the portability, ruggedness, transparency and efficiency of the system, and to make the exercise more transparent, speedy, and less cumbersome during election" (Asogwa, 2013).

In the March, 2015 general elections which the ruling party lost, the electoral commission employed the use of an ICT card reader to control voter registration. Despite challenges faced during the elections, the card reader has arguably reduced the incidence of result manipulation and violation of voter's right. However, what is not clear in the Nigerian context is how and to what extent the use of social media has changed the organisational structure of electoral bodies and how, and in what ways do voters generally respond to using of ICT for conducting elections; and how do they perceive its role in keeping them informed about political participation. Elsewhere, it has been noted that these questions require empirical investigation to consolidate the claim of ICTs to be new communication channels for citizen empowerment, greater democratic deliberation or any other normative goals (Yar'Adua et al., 2023).

### **3.3 Risk and Challenges of Social Media Use in Nigeria**

This section is concerned with the question posed by critical internet researchers regarding political threats and risk involved in the use of the media for political engagement. Social media surveillance is of great interest in this study. Arguably, surveillance is not a new concept. It has always existed in the history of time. What has changed or improved are the means of surveillance. Surveillance, which for most of human history was a matter of face-to-face surveillance, augmented with forms of recording, is now characterised by high-technology applications (Yar'Adua et al., 2021). As a result, scholars in surveillance studies and information society studies have developed a number of categories that describes the interconnection of computing surveillance.

French philosopher Michael Foucault adopts it as a symbol of his whole argument. Originally, the concept of surveillance was derived from the major theoretical and historical framework of a disciplinary model (the panopticon). Panopticon is a model prison designed by utilitarian philosopher Jeremy Bentham, and is structured so that guards can watch all the prisoners in their cells while remaining unseen. In this setting, the source of power and relationships of power are clear but the authority exercising the power remains unseen. Because the prisoners cannot see the guards, they themselves to be in a constant state of low-level even when they are not being watched. The prisoners learn to live in fear of being monitored by the guards, so they learn to discipline themselves. Foucault argues that the basic power structure of the panopticon is reproduced in many different contexts as a means of permitting authorities to monitor citizens whether in military, at work, or at school.

The panopticon induces a sense of permanent visibility that ensures the functioning of power, and perfects the operation of power by increasing the number of people who can be controlled, and decreasing the number required to operate control. Power and knowledge come from observing others. Perhaps, the real power of smart technologies lies in their ability to act as agents of change: one group at a time, one place at a time. Where people can draw the line between security and freedom, especially when modern surveillance technology is increasingly used by urban public spaces to control or modify



behaviour, tracking people who aren't incarcerated, but mobile and innocently going about their business (Oreoluwa et al., 2024).

Allmer (2015) argues that the more sophisticated societies offer greater opportunities for control and observation. Can smart phones make a difference by providing a format to organise even more appropriate and more mobilised counter-power protests, and offer more sophisticated avenues for defending democratic liberties and personal right, but their use is restricted mainly to urban professionals in Nigeria? It may be possible that coordination and cooperation, brought about by smart-phone technologies, will provide new forms of social power through organisation based on principles of just 'in time' and 'just in place'. Perhaps the real power of smart-phone technologies lies in their ability to act as agents of change, one group at a time, one place at a time. Allmer (2015) says it is better to forget the state in the struggle against power, and instead, concentrate on local struggles.

Technology is increasingly used in urban spaces to control or modify behaviour. This has resulted in many categories of surveillance, such as new surveillance, dataveillance, the electronic (super) panopticon, electronic surveillance, the World Wide Web of surveillance, digital surveillance, or and more recently Social Networking Sites in the Surveillance Society (SNS3) (Vitalis et al., 2023). Some scholars like in Vitalis et al., (2023) have cautioned that surveillance and monitoring of citizens activities will continue to be an area of concern in the emerging role of social media for citizens that engaged in political activism and social movements.

Economic and marketing surveillance is theoretically grounded in Marxism, and is concerned with institutional structures commoditizing internet users for profit making. This form of media surveillance or wealth creation and economic growth, (specifically, the capitalist relations of production in which SNS and Web 2.0 apps are operate, the "design of the machine" in industrial technological context) commoditizes and exploits (Morozov, 2011). This form capital surveillance is exceptionally well placed, especially where the ambition is to unveil cultural production in relation to marketization in developed countries.

Technology analyst Morozov's (2011) argument is that social media, by virtue of being "social" lends itself to glib overestimation of its own importance. He rejects the rosy narrative celebrating how Facebook and Twitter have enabled freedom movements around the world needs. In addition, to being a life-enhancing social communication tool, Morozov argues that technology has other guises; it is now a surveillance machine, a misrepresentation tool, a handled marketing device, and a global platform for ideologues and zealots (Morozov, 2011). In reality, to confront a more sinister tale, which is how greedy companies, fostered by western Governments for domestic surveillance needs have helped suppress them. Facebook reports a 24% rise in government requests for personal data (BBC, 2014). Government requests for Facebook's user information rose by about a quarter in the first half of 2014 over the second half of last year.

Because of such requests for personal information, Fuchs, a prominent Marxist critical communication and media scholar, refers to the threat posed by surveillance technologies, such as Deep Packet Inspection (DPI), which monitors the Internet traffic. He interprets, these technologies in the light of the emergence of a new mode of governance, in which the economic interests of the security industry and state interests interact, thus posing a threat to the society (Aondover et al., 2022). In this respect, Fuchs noted that DPI technologies are produced and sold by companies that strive for profits in the security business noting that DPI's surveillance technology carries societal implications societal implications that need to be carefully considered.

According to the Wall Street Journal, French company Amesys, sold deep packet inspection technologies to Libya where Gaddafi's regime used them in an internet spying centre in Tripoli to monitor the internet usage of Libyan and political opponents firms aided Libyan spies. Similarly, it was reported that the British Firm Gamma International sold its FinSpy software to Egyptian security authorities and the Italian firm Hacking Team sold surveillance software to security agencies in the North Africa and Middle East. In addition, WikiLeaks has described the purpose in the following way: "When citizens overthrew the dictatorships in Egypt and Libya that year, they uncovered listening rooms where devices from Gamma Corporation of the UK, Amesys of France, VASTech of South Africa and ZTE Corp of China monitored their every move online and on the phone. Surveillance companies like SS8 in the U.S., Hacking Team in Italy and Vupen in France manufacture viruses (Trojans) that hijack individual computers and phones (including iPhones, Blackberries and Androids), take over the device, record its every use, movement, and even the sights and sounds of the room it is in.

Other companies like Phoenexia in the Czech Republic collaborate with the military to create speech analysis tools. In relation to such incidence Fuchs urges scholars to investigate how government tries to monitor social media use by emerging leaders and why it could be problematic (Fuchs, 2014). Technologies such as "cookies, data mining, collaborative filtering, ambient intelligence, clickstream analysis, spyware, web crawlers and log file analysis allow an extension and intensification" of surveillance of internet users. WikiLeaks categorized the documented surveillance technologies into six types: Internet monitoring, Phone monitoring, Trojan, Speech analysis SMS monitoring, GPS tracking are put in place to monitor citizen's usage (Msugter et al., 2022).

Elsewhere in the African context there are reports that during the 2013 elections in Kenya, the National Commission for Integration and Cohesion (NCIC) monitored all political discussions and exchanges on social media in order to arrest anyone who engaged in hate speech during the political campaigns. In the campaign to the 2013 elections, bloggers were arrested for expressing sentiments on their blogs that were evaluated as "hate speeches". The Kenyan government has engaged in intensive surveillance, especially during the electioneering period, in attempts to monitor online "hate speech". Kenya's historical experiences have created concerns about "hate speech and violence, leading to efforts aimed at censoring inappropriate messages that are intended to harm internet users or compromise the security of the nation".

In another instance, when the Walk to Work Protests started in 2011 in Uganda, the Communications Commission of Uganda ordered all Internet service providers to block Facebook and Twitter, blaming them for fuelling the flames. However, in other cases, filters can be employed by the social networking sites, on a national platform Filtering on national platforms is often used because norms with regard to what counts as appropriate or inappropriate content are very much culturally defined which is why most platforms deploy national filters (Yar'Adua et al., 2023).

Similarly, in the Nigerian context, although no individuals have been sentenced to prison or physically attacked for online activities as of April 2012, security agencies in late 2008 detained and interrogated two overseas bloggers upon their arrival in Nigeria. There are also reports the Government has prepared a legislative bill to punish online citizens who criticises or demean leaders on social media platforms. In addition, there are reports that the Government connive with Israel to install massive surveillance tools for monitoring citizen's political activities and terrorism on the internet. This echoes Fuchs narrative where western countries for economic gain sell ICT tool to semi democratic

nations for profit maximisation and thus pose threat to citizens utilising the media (Obasi & Msughter, 2023).

Jonathan Elendu, author of the website Elendu Reports, was arrested in October 2008 by the State Security Service, which takes orders directly from the president. He was reportedly questioned in relation to national security issues and for “sponsoring a guerrilla news agency.” Many observers believed he was detained for an alleged connection with another online platform, Sahara Reporters that published photographs of the President’s 13-year-old son “waving wads of money around and holding a policeman’s gun or for falsely reporting that Yar’Adua had died during the 2007 presidential election campaign. Elendu was released after two weeks without facing charges. The following month, another U.S. based online journalist Emmanuel Emeka Asiwe, editor of the Huhuonline website, was detained. The State Security Service similarly stated that Asiwe was being questioned about “matters of national security” and released him after a week of interrogation (Obasi & Msughter, 2023).

In January 2011, Okey Ndibe, a non-resident columnist and online blogger for a local newspaper was briefly detained on arrival in Nigeria. His passport was seized, and he was directed to report to the State Security Service offices. Mr. Ndibe told the Associated Press that “he believed his brief detention and the passport seizure came from the government’s displeasure over his articles.” According to the news blog Transparency NG, “Ndibe’s columns criticized the 2007 election that brought late President Umaru Yar’Adua to power... From then on, Ndibe never referred to Yar’Adua as the president.” The government did not comment about the reason for his arrest as returned days later. In the light of these experiences, the aim is to find out factors that affects citizens use of the internet and Government understanding of internet censorship in Nigeria.

The internet’s potential role as a bulwark or alternative to state power has been undermined but not invalidated by Edward Snowden revelations about the extent of internet and phone surveillance by US intelligence. Confirmation that the US practices the surveillance techniques, until recently, it claimed distinguished it from its non-democratic political opponents, does not call into question the internet’s efficacy as a tool for political change. With regards to the digital divide, infrastructural challenges and a lack of digital literacy remains an issue in the Nigerian context.

#### **IV. Conclusion**

This paper explored the application of social media in governance in Nigeria. The paper argued that the emergence of social media in the last few decades has made it the centre of social interactions, surpassing contributions of any other innovations in the history of mass media. Generally, information is necessary for effective modern social, economic and political development; social media has made people, being the sources, the processors as well as the end users of all information. Social media has its powerful networks; its transmission is so fast and strongly effective on many people. In this context, the advancement of ICT has democratized and facilitated access as well as use of social media to promote constructive public discussion on critical socio economic and political issues between government officials and the public. Information is power, information is the engine room for meaningful and sustainable development and information is also the catalyst for effective social interaction. One of the biggest benefits accruable from the use of social media is the inherent freedom of expression.

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