

## **Chapter Six**

### **Disruptive social media in elections, governance and politics: Evidence from Nigeria**

---

**Justine John Dyikuk**

Department of Mass Communication, Faculty of Arts,  
University of Jos, Nigeria.

[justinejohndyikuk@gmail.com](mailto:justinejohndyikuk@gmail.com)

**Peter Eshioke Egielewa**

Department of Mass Communication,  
Edo State University Uzairue, Nigeria.

[peter.egielewa@edouniversity.edu.ng](mailto:peter.egielewa@edouniversity.edu.ng)

---

#### **Abstract**

The current explosion in Information and Communications Technology (ICT) has turned the world into a rollercoaster for information and disinformation. Marshall McLuhan's concept of the world being a "Global Village" (1964) tells the story better. No thanks to social media, governance, politics, and elections face informational and discursive crises. Recent studies indicate that news organisations exaggerate or fabricate information to support their ideology. The global health challenge, COVID-19 ushered in an era of massive infodemic and disinformation. Smartphone technology and the advent of citizen journalism have further heightened the level of disruptive social media in Nigeria's nascent polity. This qualitative study which employed critical discuss analysis investigated disrupted social media in elections, governance and politics in Nigeria and found that social media disinformation, hate speech and fake news are now common commodities. It also discovered that new media is contending with misinformation and government at all levels seems concerned with their officialdom thus is gaging the press. It maintained that digital authoritarianism occasioned by propaganda sandwiched in political correctness has created constant face-off between the government, the media and the citizens. Concretely, Nigeria's President, Muhammadu Buhari and former US President Donald Trump were banned by the micro-blogging platform Twitter for allegedly inciting violence. An attempted social media bill was thrown out of legislation. To mitigate informational discursive crisis in the nation's political process, the study concluded that policy formulation is a catalyst for nipping disruptions in governance occasioned by social media usage.

**Keywords:** Disruptive media, Disinformation and misinformation, Political correctness, Nigeria's governance.

### Background

The advent of social media has debuted disruptions in various fields of human endeavour. Disruptive social media constitutes new technology that assists in creating new terrains or value chains by disrupting existing values. No thanks to the current explosion in Information and Communications Technology (ICT), the world has become a rollercoaster for information and disinformation. Increasingly, Marshall McLuhan's concept of the world being a "Global Village" (1964) reveals how technology connects people. On a global scale, despite connecting people and playing a significant role in governance, politics and elections, social media is faced with challenges such as disinformation and discursive crises. For example, a recent study found that fifty nine (59) percent of people believe that new organisations exaggerate or fabricate information to support their ideologies (Djordjevic, 2021). The United Nations' Secretary-General, M. Antonio Guterres, described the massive infodemic, including disinformation and misinformation that followed the COVID-19 health crisis as a promoter of the crisis itself (UNESCO, 2020).

On a large scale, Osinbajo (cited in Vanguard, 2021) stressed that the democratisation of information which accompanies the information-age has brought about related risks with implications for economic and social-political stability in Nigeria. He lamented that fake news which warps reality is now being trafficked on a large proportion by many people leading to social conflicts. To be sure, disinformation, hate speech and fake news are now common commodities in society. While the news media is battling misinformation, government at all levels - federal, state and local government in their officialdom are gaging the press on the grounds of fake news and hate speech. Smartphone technology and the rise of citizen journalism have further heightened the level of disruptive social media in Nigeria's nascent polity. Before journalists get a crime or scene of violence, eyewitnesses would have used their smartphones to take pictures and record what is happening and posted it on various social media handles. Digital authoritarianism laced with propaganda is creating constant face-off between the government, press and citizenry (Dyikuk, 2021). For example, in Nigeria and the United States of America, President Muhammadu Buhari and the former US President were banned by the micro-blogging platform Twitter for allegedly inciting violence (Vachhatani, 2021). In fact, an attempted social media bill was thrown out of legislation.

This chapter employs the critical discuss analysis to investigate how disruptive media technology creates a competitive society where emerging trends disrupt the existing value networks in Nigeria's polity. From the standpoint of political communication, the study would ascertain how social media disruptions positively or negatively impact Nigeria's governance which encapsulates election and politics. After a systematic review of relevant literature, the study would make valuable recommendations for policy implementation to catalyse further social media research in Africa.

### **Clarification of concepts**

The following concepts will be explained to understand better this chapter: disruptive social media, governance, politics, election, and Nigeria.

#### ***Disruptive social media***

Disruptive social media is a phrase coined to describe how new technology assists in creating new value chains by disrupting existing values in society. Disruptive means preventing something from operating or continuing in a usual way (Collins Dictionary, 2022). Accordingly, “Disruption” encapsulates a situation where existing reality is overthrown by new realities. In their explanation, Christensen, Rayner and McDonald (2014) opined that disruption focuses on improving goods and services due to new demands. Social media refers to new types of media which give room for interactive participation. They include various platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram and amongst others which enable users to gather information and interact with one another towards regulating the community (Christensen, Rayner & McDonald, cited in Manning, 2014).

In this study, the word “disruptive” is used in reference to how social media influences users. As such, disruptive social media refers to those interactive media that enter and expand the means of social communication thus catalyzing the political landscape. Although they could improve with time, they attack established means of social communication thereby disrupting the traditional pattern of transforming information or communication between people. In fact, they are now replacing traditional means of social communication.

#### ***Governance***

The World Bank was the first body to use the term governance when it conceived it as the way in which power is exercised to manage a country's socio-economic resources by the government. It captures it beautifully when it states that: “Governance is the manner in which power is exercised in the management of a country's economic and social resources for development” (World Bank, 1992: 6). This signifies that governance means more than government. According to Mehraj and Shamim (2020), governance is the process of decision-making and how decisions are implemented. Governance is also seen as a system of managing a country’s resources while exercising political power. It refers to exercising political control over a group of people who are part of a social contract which binds them as leaders and the led (Sahni, 2010). In this chapter, governance would be used to encapsulate politics and elections which constitute a process of exercising political power over a community or state in which they masses are partners in progress for the betterment of society.

#### ***Politics***

Politics is seen as the struggle for power among actors who are after conflicting desires regarding issues of public interest. It involves the use of attempts by one person to use power to influence others to behave in a manner that they would ordinarily not do (Worsley, 2014,

cited in Ajayi & Fashagba, 2014). In his explanation, Worsley posits that political gladiators strive to secure political power to influence the direction or path their society or organisations should go. In this chapter, politics is associated with governance of a country including politics and electioneering campaigns.

### ***Election***

In this chapter, election is conceived as a decision-making process through which specific populations choose certain individuals to occupy public office for a particular period. It is also the formal process of selecting people for public office or accepting or rejecting a political proposition. As the electorate, through the ballot box, citizens are responsible for those who will represent them at the helm of affairs.

### ***Nigeria***

Situated between the Sahel in the North and Gulf of Guinea in the South, Nigeria is a West African country that has a landmass of 923,769 square kilometers with above 200 million people. As the most populated country in Africa, Nigeria has a Northern border with Niger, a southern border with Chad, an eastern border with Cameroon and a Western border with the Benin Republic. With the seat of Central government in Abuja, the nation's capital, Nigeria has 36 states (Blench, 2019; The World Factbook, 2022).

### **Theoretical framework**

The *Uses and Gratifications Theory* studies how the public consumes and uses the media. This theory posits that consumers utilise the media to gratify specific needs. In this context, media consumers may decide to use the media to seek for entertainment, find information and relate with like-minded individuals. Such needs satisfy specific users whose motives can also easily be distinguishable. Each of the uses meets a particular condition and these needs, in turn, determine how social media is used. Scholars can determine the motivations behind media use through the different groups' media choices (Media Effect Theories, n.d).

For instance, a person watching a film and tweeting simultaneously may be watching the moving to entertain himself while tweeting to pass across information on the movie. In other words, the individual satisfies the needs of entertainment and information dissemination at the same time while coming to both media (Media Effect Theories, n.d). In particular, the internet enables us to meet needs that previously were unthinkable. Since the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, social media, particularly Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp, have become an avenue to satisfy various needs. One of such is the entertainment dimension and another is an alternative platform to express themselves. In some cases, social media provides a platform for people to galvanise around shared interests. This is true in cases of mobilisation for protests and social action (Egielewa, n.d).

Social media are also employed to mobilise candidates during elections, organise rallies and even protests against other candidates. For instance, Barack Obama is said to owe his electoral victory as President of the United States of America in 2008 and 2012 to his use of social media (Aaker & Chang, 2009). President Donald Trump was also elected because of his use of Twitter. He personally attributed his victory to the use of social media particularly Twitter (Baynes, 2017). In like manner, the Arab Spring which led to the fall of regimes in North Africa and the Middle East occurred because of the influence of social media (Wolfsfeld, Segev & Sheaffer, 2013). Therefore, social media can be called “disruptive.” It is disruptive because it can help upset the status quo in politics, particularly regarding elections in Africa, including Nigeria.

Katz, Gurevitch and Haas (1973) maintain that *Uses and Gratifications Theory* has five categories that are related to human needs namely cognitive, affective, personal integration, social integration and tension release. This makes for the deliberate use of the media and the gratifications users obtain thereof. The theory is relevant to this chapter because people use social media for various reasons. Politicians exploit it to mobilise for elections and their parties and candidature. By contrast, voters use social media to not only rally supporters and voters for their candidates and parties but to also protest against candidates they do not like.

### **Literature review and discussion: Disruptive social media in modern-day**

The pace at which people access social media websites in our world today is unprecedented. This has increased significantly with Smartphones’ development, making it easy for people to access the internet at ease. Creation of Social media users’ accounts have had a significant increase (McAfee, 2006; Wigand, 2010). For instance, in 2021, Facebook recorded over a 2.91 billion users worldwide and Twitter has over 396.5 accounts in use (Dean, 2022). This makes social media an indispensable tool that can be used to connect and interact with large audiences. These tools are ‘social’ because they enhance interaction among users (Asongu & Nicholas, 2018).

Communication through social media has turned the world into a “Global village.” Individuals can interact with different people at ease. There is a shift from the analogue process of communication to a digitalised communication process. This makes interaction and communication easy. With the digitalisation of the communication process, people can quickly sell their ideas, opinions, observations and comments to bigger audiences. This includes information on the politics and government policies. According to Asongu and Nicholas (2018), digitalising the communication process enables people to employ social media as vehicles for discussing political issues which affect them. Before now, most people had a relaxed attitude with respect to political discussions.

Political participation was left to men who had an idea of how the country was governed. Consequently, the landscape of politics has changed. Women and youth are now participating in political discussions. Instructively, social media communication is now replacing the

analogue process of interactions about politics and disseminating political information. Political communication has been made easy (Asongu & Nicholas, 2018). Accordingly, politicians also use these digitalised media for political communication. They use them to propagate their ideologies, sample people's opinions, campaign, gain support and votes (Iyengar & Simon, 2000; McNair, 2017). According to Olorunnisola and Douai (2013) mobile phones are a potential for increasing political participation. The scholars contend that they can add or reduce meaning and more understanding in political circles.

Asongu and Nicholas (2018) noted that the digitalisation of communication in politics has helped to make and sustain a better democratic community characterised by broader involvement of the people in the governance and decision making in the state, compared to what was in practice before where politics was left in the hands of specific groups of people. Then, it was difficult for citizens to democratically checkmate government policies and activities (McNair, 2017). The demands and interests of the electorates were quickly put off. This shows the limitation of the old pattern of political communication. However, with the digitalised communication process in politics, many people and groups now have the opportunity to engage more actively in political affairs (Asongu & Nicholas, 2018).

Consequently, social media communication has also made it possible for political parties to influence their audience quickly. According to Omotayo and Folorunso (2020), employing social media for political communication means accessing popular online social media platforms for political campaigns and activities. Such social media include WhatsApp, Facebook, TikTok, YouTube, Instagram, LinkedIn, Twitter, and others. Political parties use most of these platforms for campaign and political programmes, sample people's opinions, and disseminate information. Social media websites have become robust platforms for interactive communication and sharing information. It has also developed strong powerbase to influence and change political values and enhance political socialisation (Omotayo & Folorunso, 2020).

Asongu and Nicholas (2018) hold that social media have also influenced political strategies among politicians. It provides opportunities for those in politics to interact with the masses. Constituents can quickly be oriented on specific governmental policies anytime, anywhere. Indeed, there is a shift in the communication pattern adopted by political parties and government agencies compared to ten years ago. The scholars maintain that information from social media affects voting behaviour among youths because the electorates can search for information about their choice of candidates on the internet before voting for them.

The social media applications are fertile interactive ground for users to make their comments and observations. Social media users can make comments and observations about political aspirants through these platforms, thereby sampling other people's opinions, information and ideas about certain political aspirants. He also argued that politically, informed-voters gather information about the candidates who want to contest elections. This, they do by sampling

other people's comments and observations about the candidates. Consequently, social media is gradually changing the voting behaviour of the electorate and the younger generation (Asongu & Nicholas, 2018).

According to Biswas (2014), the use of social media handles for political discussion is no longer new in some Asian countries like India. This is obvious in the way politicians avail themselves on social media platforms for easy interaction with the people and to attract prospective voters. The electorates do not need to wait for their constituent's representative to come back home before airing their grievances and registering their satisfaction or displeasure; they simply do this through social media. This has served efficiently for them. Furthermore, most young electorates now view social media as an easy and effective medium through which they can be politically active. From the above, it is notable that social media does not only enhance political communication but also promotes political socialisation and participation. It enhances greater involvement of the masses in the political affairs of their country (Bimber & Copeland, 2011). It is an essential tool for political socialisation, mobilisation and participation (Omotayo & Folorunso, 2020).

### **Elections, governance, and politics in Nigeria: A historical approach**

No discussion on elections, governance and politics in Nigeria will be complete without mentioning the invaluable contributions of nationalists like Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, Anthony Enahoro, Herbert Macaulay, Nnamdi Azikiwe and Obafemi Awolowo. These were the founders of Nigeria who fought to liberate the nation from western colonialism. From Tafawa Balewa, Nigeria's first prime minister, to Nnamdi Azikiwe, the country's first elected president; these nationals struggled to ensure Nigeria's independence (Asadu, 2020). With a federal constitution, three regions, and four regional structures in place, Nigeria operated as a parliamentary democratic state that emphasised majority rule. Unlike other countries of Africa, which had a one-party system after their independence, Nigeria had a written constitution that gave way to a multiparty system.

The first election in the country was held in 1923. There was, however, no popular participation in that election; the provision of the 1922 Constitution, which introduced elections in Nigeria, laid the concrete for electoral laws in the country. As it were, elections were based on income male suffrage rather than universal adult suffrage. Accordingly, elections until 1954 were based on the electoral laws that the colonial state imposed on citizens. Notwithstanding, the enactment of Lytleton's Constitution of 1954 began to liberalise politics and governance in Nigeria (Orji, 2021). The idea of a democratic state could not guarantee the survival of the First Republic. This was due to structural weaknesses, especially the disproportionate power of the north in the federation.

This Constitution replaced the erstwhile electoral laws based on income male suffrage by providing a new legal framework based on adult suffrage. As it were, the Constitution

diversified the elections by making provisions for different polls in the regional and central legislature. It also provided other electoral laws for the three regional structures in the country. In the Eastern Region, only people above 21 years were allowed to vote. In the West, only adult males who paid taxes could vote. The indirect college system that limited voting to adult male taxpayers was used (Orji, 2021).

Since 1954, transition elections have been organised by departing from the colonial system. It is instructively to note that between 1967 and 1970, Nigeria went through a civil war. There was no party politics at the time. However, a rebirth of participatory democracy between 1979 and 1983 gave birth to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Republic (Udogu, 1992). However, elections held in 1979, 1993 and 1999 were conducted by military regimes. More so, consolidation elections organised by a civilian government but were meant to consolidate civil rule took place in 1964/65, 1983, 2003, 2007, 2011, 2015 and 2019 (Agbaje & Adejumo 2006; Orji, 2021). Between 1954 and 2019, Nigeria conducted twelve general elections.

A new form of political struggle was birthed in the 1950s when the “nationalists” opposed the British colonialists to demand exit. Sadly, the former political opposition would soon engage in fierce political battles by turning around to confront themselves in deadly political battles after the colonialists had departed our shores. It is on record that the calm recorded during the 1979 elections was due to the fear of military retribution in case of a breakdown of law and order. The landslide victories recorded by the ruling parties in 1964/65, 1983, 2003 and 2007 elections were attributed to a deliberate attempt by the ruling party to monopolise the electoral process through fraud, thereby moving the country toward a one-party system (Orji, 2021). First Republic (1964/65 elections) collapsed because the NPC, in its desperate attempt to manipulate the election to their favour, monopolised political power in Western Nigeria; they used the NNDP as a proxy, resulting in political chaos. The Nigerian Election of 1983 was viewed as a sham. In that election, the NPN, which controlled 7 of the 19, wanted to expand to 12 states through rigging (Post & Vickers, 1973; Tijani, 1986).

During the 1999 elections, three political parties clinched seats at the state and national levels. The Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) won the Presidential seat with Olusegun Obasanjo as President. Subsequent elections in 2003 and 2007, which saw PDP victorious at the federal level, were said to have been rigged. The PDP, All Nigerian Peoples Party (ANPP), and Action Congress (AC) challenged the elections at the national and state levels. The general elections in 2003, which returned Obasanjo as President, witnessed a more sophisticated version of electoral fraud than the 1964/65 and 1983 elections. To this end, Election Observers in Nigeria observed that the 2003 elections marked the beginning of another pattern of electoral-fraud in the country (Jim-Nwoko, 2019). Fake news and hate speech through traditional media played a role. This GSM was new at the time.

However, the worst type of electoral impunity took place in 2007 when Umaru Musa-Yar'Adua was elected President under the PDP. In his remarks concerning the ruling PDP, President Olusegun Obasanjo declared that the election would be a "do-or-die affair" (Suberu, 2007). Dubbed the "direct capture of the people's mandate", the 2007 election was characterised by competitive rigging and crude accumulation of votes (Ibrahim & Ibeanu, 2009). Another commentator noted that: "The flaws that characterise the conduct of the 2007 elections severely dented Nigeria's image and electoral integrity" (Orji, 2021: 13). When Yar'Adua died, Goodluck Jonathan completed his tenure. Then came the 2011 elections, which were keenly contested between the incumbent of the PDP and Gen. Muhammadu Buhari, who was the presidential candidate for the Congress for Progressive Change (CPC). When the latter lost, his utterances led to the loss of lives and livelihoods (Jim-Nwoko, 2019). The advent of Chinese Smartphones contributed to spreading fake results and fear of attacks following the outcome of the general elections.

In 2015, the Presidential candidate of the new political alliance, namely the All Progressives Congress (APC), General Buhari, defeated the incumbent, Goodluck Jonathan. The latter conceded defeat before the results were announced by congratulating General Buhari. Jonathan did not challenge the election in court (Jim-Nwoko, 2019). There was another general election in February and March 2019. The polls which claimed lives were described as inconclusive in various places. Like the 2003 and 2007 elections, there were alleged cases of massive rigging. Although General Buhari, the Presidential candidate of the ruling party (APC), won against the presidential candidate of the opposition (PDP), Atiku Abubakar, the Supreme Court upheld the result of the election in favour of the incumbent (BBC, 2019).

Counting from when Nigeria returned to civil rule, there have been six general elections in 1999, 2003, 2007, 2011, 2015 and 2019. Since 2015, the incumbent Muhammadu Buhari, who was re-elected on the ticket of the ruling APC, has been President. The APC and Buhari led administration used digitalised communication and social media communication as a tool to ascend power twice. This they achieved by targeting the youth with the change mantra, which went viral on WhatsApp, Twitter, and Facebook. Ironically, the same administration would attempt the passage of a failed notorious "Social media bill of Nigeria", which sought to give the government license to control how the masses use social media. Due to mass protests, the bill was thrown out by the National Assembly.

### **Disruptive social media in the political process in Nigeria: Perspectives**

Over the years, the pace at which Nigerians subscribe to different social media applications has increased. Nigerians are avid users of social media who spend an average time of 3 hours and 41 minutes on social media daily. The percentage of Nigerians who are active on different social media platforms increased by 22% in 12 months - January 2020 - January 2021 - higher than the usual global increase (Jacob, 2021). A study in 2021 showed that about 33 million Nigerians are active on social media. Among these Social media applications, WhatsApp was

rated the most popular in the country, having more than 90 million users; this is followed by Facebook, YouTube and Instagram in that order (Kamer, 2022). Another analytical research showed that, over 109 million people use the internet in Nigeria. As of January 2022, internet penetration in Nigeria stood at 51.0 percent of the total population (Kemp, 2021). From the above, social media is a fast means of disseminating information.

The rate at which social media platforms are now used as an easy step to rally political support cannot be overemphasised. This is as a result of many people who access social media websites daily. Its interactive platform makes it encouraging for people to comment on their ideas. In Nigeria, political and opinion leaders had increasingly used social media applications to gather support from the people compared to what was obtainable in the past, when traditional media was widely used (Faith & Ijeoma, 2016). This growing usage among both political and opinion leaders has become imminent because the audiences that access social media websites daily. Campaign planners now see social media communication as an essential channel to mobilise political support.

Faith and Ijeoma (2016) maintained that during the 2011 Nigeria's General Elections, political groups and civil organisations used different social media platforms to communicate election processes to their members and the general public. They explained that President Barack Obama's victory in the 2008 US election was attributed to his successful use of Facebook to garner political support. Eventually, this became a huge motivation for politicians in Nigeria. Notably, Nigerian politicians are gradually taking their campaigns to the social media network and other online platforms. They believe they would sell their political ideologies to the populace through social media. For instance, almost all political aspirants who are coming out for the 2023 General Elections already have social media pages that they are using to mobilise support for their political ambition.

This is effective because social media applications provide interactive platforms that enable users to gather followers. Notably, social media applications such as YouTube, MySpace, Blogs, Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, Instagram, etc., have witnessed citizen journalism (Eledan, 2011). Scholars like Carson (2016) and Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy and Silvestre (2011) have advanced the argument that understanding the functional building blocks of social media is critical to appreciating new technology in advancing research and overall developments in Africa. Individuals without proper training and knowledge of journalism now record, video, and share information with the cyber world. Some people also use social media to spread hate speech and false news. However, this prompted the consideration to make policies that will regulate the use of social media and blog sites to curb hate speech and false news.

Eledan (2011) noted that former Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan also joined leaders who used social media platforms to gain political support. The expert further asserted that during

the 26<sup>th</sup> Convocation ceremony of the University of Port Harcourt, Jonathan promised to open a Facebook Page to connect with millions of Nigerians for achieving this dream of being elected. The then President saw the possibility of gaining political support through social media, and he explored that opportunity. According to Nwafor, Chinedu, Egwu, Nwankwo and Nweze (2013), Nigeria first experimented with social media to monitor elections during the April 2011 General Elections.

Officials of the Nigeria Independent National Electoral Commission had, earlier in March 2011, welcomed the assistance of civil society volunteers with their medial social accounts and a new media situation room that received feedback from those in the polling units and later began to provide accurate time information and answer questions from constituents. Nigerian politicians have actively used social media for political campaigns. They sent bulk text messages and voice messages in large quantities. They do all these to win support and solicit votes (Nwafor et al., 2013). More so, stand-by organisations such as “ReclaimNaija,” “WangoNet,” “Enough Is Enough Nigeria” established platforms where citizens can report election-related issues with videos, evidence, voice messages and pictures. At the same time, already existing media houses such as Channels Television, 234Next and Punch newspaper also used new social media platforms to share information and garner feedback from viewers (Nwafor et al., 2013).

These scholars further note that during the 2011 elections, many Nigerians used their blackberries and Twitter feeds to disseminate information. Among them was Gbenga, a 33-year-old IT consultant and activist. His team designed a Smartphone application called Revoda which allowed voters to immediately upload reports of delayed ballot materials. Through their Revoda website, they also posted reports about gangs who were intimidating voters and a daily summary of events to electoral officials, Western observers and Nigerians. Pictures, photos, details and videos from various polling stations were quickly uploaded to Facebook and YouTube. This gave many people at home and abroad the opportunity to follow the election process (Nwafor et al., 2013).

In addition, another group, the “ReclaimNaija” used text messages and e-mail reports to compile live online mapping for trouble spots. As well, individual “Twitter activists” looked out for polling stations where there was widespread rigging and warned about bombings at polling stations (Nwafor et al., 2013). This exhaustive use of social media may have led to the success of the 2011 General Elections. The single narrative of using social media to propagate hate speech or fake news is now overtaken by an avalanche of social media enthusiasts who employ new technology to complement the work of professional journalists. Through citizen journalism, people are able to give an eye-witness account of what is happening around them by reporting such to traditional media organisations which confirm and broadcast to heterogeneous audiences.

**Contribution of the chapter**

First, the chapter has demonstrated that political communication which replaces the analogue process of interaction in disseminating political information (Asongu & Nicholas, 2018) now makes it possible for people to actively participate in the political process. It further reveals the limitation of the old pattern of political communication which was linear while highlighting the importance of digital communication that is participatory.

Second, social media disruptions embolden political stalwarts from different parties to propagate their ideologies, sample people's opinions and initiate campaigns to gain votes (Iyengar & Simon, 2000, McNair, 2017). As in most parts of Asia and Africa, politicians now employ social media platforms to interact easily with the electorate (Biswas, 2014).

Third, in a society where politics was left in the hands of few individuals making it difficult for citizens to checkmate government (McNair, 2017), the study found that digitalisation of communication has paved way for citizens to be more involved in the political process by holding government accountable. Also, various groups are now more actively involved in the political affairs of the country (Asongu & Nicholas, 2018). This means that the electorate do not have to wait for their representatives to return home before holding them to account for their stewardship. Often, they take to social media to air their grievances or register their satisfaction.

Fourth, the chapter discovered that social media are critical components of disruptions as websites provide robust interactive communication for the masses. Increasingly too, this strong power-base influences and changes political values while enhancing political socialisation (Omotayo & Folorunso, 2020; Asongu & Nicholas, 2018).

Fifth, the studies also found that social media now affects the voting behaviour of young people. This is because the electorate are able to search for information about candidates of their choice on the internet before voting for them. This is further informed by the current shift in the communication pattern adopted by political parties and government agencies. Indeed, social media changes the voting patterns of the electorate and the younger generation (Asongu & Nicholas, 2018).

It is, therefore, safe to conclude that the chapter has contributed to knowledge because it has demonstrated how social media enhances political communication by promoting political socialisation and participation. It equally enhances greater involvement of the masses in the political affairs of their country even as it engenders political mobilisation (Bimber & Copeland, 2011; Omotayo & Folorunso, 2020).

### **Recommendations**

**Robust investment in e-accessibility (social media):** All stakeholders in the media industry should invest heavily in providing e-accessibility for all Nigerians. The recent disclosure by the Minister of Communications and Digital Economy that digital economy projects (E-Accessibility) were inaugurated in Bauchi, Lagos, Enugu, Abuja, Katsina, Delta and the Kebbi States should be sustained. Consequently, these infrastructure and skills would benefit residents of these states and the nation. Indeed, it is a bold step in improving governance, politics and electioneering in the country (Olafusi, 2022). More should be done, especially in improving communication and Information Technologies (ICT) facilities and making data cheaper for Nigerians. This will make more Nigerians patronage various social media handles. For The World Bank (2019), e-accessibility is possible through improving digital infrastructure, strengthening digital platforms, increasing access to digital financial services, improving the policy environment for digital entrepreneurship and closing the digital skills knowledge gap.

**Sustaining a digital economy:** There is an urgent need to diversify the nation's oil-based economy for a digital economy. Current efforts by the Ministry of Communications and Digital Economy to diversify the economy by creating a new leading digital economy (Aginam, 2017; Dyikuk & Chinda, 2017) should be further maintained. The Minister of Communications and Digital Economy, Isa Ali Ibrahim Pantami should invite local and foreign investors to invest in the tech industry. It was in the news that in two years, the ministry of communication generated over N1trn revenue (Olafusi, 2022). This effort should be continued. Although the nation has made some giant strides in strengthening Nigeria's digital space, there is a need for public and private sector players to further push the Nigeria's Economic Recovery and Growth Plan 2017–2020 (ERGP) which recognises the importance of implementing the digital-led strategy towards growing the nation's economy for a more competitive 21<sup>st</sup>-century global market. The digital economy is a crucial driver for economic growth and sustainability in Nigeria (The World Bank, 2019).

**Social media regulation:** Although the social media bill was overwhelmingly thrown out by public opinion, Honourable members of the National Assembly can still work in collaboration with their constituents, media scholars, experts in the media industry and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) to come up with a people-oriented media regulation which holds people responsible for sharing hate speech and fake news that relates to governance, politics and elections. There is an urgent need for a balanced solution irrespective of the masses' biases against the political elite. This is because almost everyone is a victim of media machinations. At this crucial moment in which Nigeria's statehood is threatened, the erstwhile notorious "social media bill of Nigeria" should be replaced with a balanced regulation. This is indeed crucial (Dada-Qadri, 2020). This would curb acts of treasonable felony, electoral fraud and shenanigans in governance.

**Responsible use of media:** Social Media disruptions in every sphere of life are a call for responsible use of such platforms. Based on *Social Responsibility Theory*, it behoves every individual to verify the information before sharing. This can be achieved by searching suspicious information on Google Search for verification. Only news or content published by credible sources should pass for credible information. It falls to the National Orientation Agency (NOA) to educate and mobilise the public on the dangers of using social media to disseminate fake news and or hate speech. In the light of media, law and ethics, citizens need to act responsibly regarding information-sharing. As such, “media leaders must leverage the considerable influence of the media to seek ways of achieving a common position on the legal and acceptable way to use social media” (Osinbajo, cited in Vanguard, 2021).

**Sustaining electronic voting:** Today, the digitalisation of almost all aspects of modern life is the fruit of a revolution in technology (Jacob, 2021). Due to the impact of social media penetration in the country, the recent passage of the electoral bill by an Act of the Parliament was a right step in the right direction. INEC must move a step further by ensuring that the requisite infrastructure for live transmission of the election results is in place. Perhaps it is crucial to learn from international best practices. If this is sustained, it will enhance good governance and fair play in politics for credible elections. Undoubtedly, any electoral law that accommodates electronic voting and direct transmission of results would fully “Safeguard Nigeria’s democracy” (Premium Times, 2021).

### **Conclusion**

This qualitative study has made a modest attempt at filling the gap in the literature regarding the lacuna in policy formulation and direction to nip disruptions in governance as a result of social media. It has demonstrated that social media is a veritable tool for political engagements. The valuable recommendations in this work aim to mitigate various disruptions towards creating an informational discursive crisis in the nation’s political process. This is to curb the harmful disorders of social media in Nigeria’s fledging polity. In addition, the study revealed that the various dangerous social media disruptions are, making leeway for fake news and hate speech as well as perpetuating electoral fraud.

Notwithstanding the negative impact of social media in the country, the scholars found (Asongu & Nicholas, 2018) that social media disruptions could also positively create a new avenue for sharing values capable of knocking off erstwhile value orientations. Importantly too, the ever-growing desire among mass communication scholars for social media research is critical. Experts such as Carson (2016) and Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy and Silvestre (2011) have developed new methods of social media research. What is more, we saw that the single narrative of employing social media to propagate hate speech or fake news is being overtaken by an army of social media enthusiasts who use new technology to complement the work of professional journalists. This they do through citizen journalism – a phenomenon that

allows them to give an eye-witness account of happenings around them by reporting it to traditional media outlets.

Interestingly, Osinbajo emphasized that “the very meaning of the term media owner is changing and no longer refers to persons with the profile of those who have studied journalism” (cited in Vanguard, 2021). On the contrary, he maintains that “in this era of citizen journalism, every citizen has a voice, whether through blogs, website or online publications among others” (cited in Vanguard, 2021). This voice complements what traditional media does that checkmate criminality, rigging during elections and enhancing good governance. In conclusion, against all misgivings, disruptive social media gives voice to the voiceless in Nigeria for improving elections, politics and government.

## References

- Aaker, J., & Chang, V. (2009). Obama and the power of social media and technology. Case No. M321.
- Agbaje, A., & Adejumobi, S. (2006). 'Do Votes Count? Travails of electoral politics in Nigeria. *Africa Development*. 31(3): 25-44.
- Aginam, E. (2017). Digital switchover. Retrieved from [www.daargroup.com/daargroup/latest-news/vanguardngr-2017-digital-switch-over-fresh-breath-of-hope-as-NBC-unfolds-new-strategy-direction](http://www.daargroup.com/daargroup/latest-news/vanguardngr-2017-digital-switch-over-fresh-breath-of-hope-as-NBC-unfolds-new-strategy-direction)
- Alejandro, J. (2010). Journalism in the age of social media. Oxford: Reuters Institute for the study of journalism. [1-18].
- Asadu, C. (2020). Nigeria is 60: Here are those whose labour led to independence. Retrieved from [www.thecable.ng/Nigeria-is-60-here-are-those-whose-labour-led-to-independence](http://www.thecable.ng/Nigeria-is-60-here-are-those-whose-labour-led-to-independence)
- Asongu, S. O., & Nicholas, M. (2018): Governance and social media in African countries: An empirical investigation. *African Governance and Development Institute (AGDI)*, Yaoundé. AGDI Working Paper, No. WP/18/039.
- Baynes, C. (2017). Donald Trump says he would not be President without Twitter. Retrieved from <https://www.independent.co.uk/tech/donald-trump-tweets-twitter-social-media-facebook-instagram-fox-business-network-would-not-be-president-a8013491.html>
- BBC (2019). Nigerian General Election 2019. Retrieved from [www.bbc.co.uk/news/topics/crx60q1k8ldt/nigerian-general-election-2019](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/topics/crx60q1k8ldt/nigerian-general-election-2019)
- Bimber, B., & Copeland, L. (2011). Digital media and traditional political participation over time in the U.S., *Journal of Information Technology & Politics*. 10:2, pp. 125-137.
- Biswas, A., Ingle, N., & Roy, M. (2014). Influence of social media on voting behaviour. *Journal of Power, Politics & Governance*, 2(2), pp. 127-155. Retrieved from [https://evok.pw/xag\\_waka\\_go.pdf](https://evok.pw/xag_waka_go.pdf)
- Blench, R. (2019). An Atlas of Nigerian Languages. McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research. London: University of Cambridge.
- Christensen, C. M., Rayner, M. E., & McDonald, R. (2015). What is disruptive innovation? *Harvard Business Review*. 93, 44-53
- Collins Dictionary, (2022). Disruptive: Adjective. Retrieved from <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/disruptive>
- Dada-Qadri, M. (2020). Social media regulation in Nigeria: The necessity, cost and best. Retrieved from <https://thenigerialawyer.com/social-media-regulation-in-nigeria-the-necessity-cost-and-best-alternatives-by-mujib-dada-qadri-caballo/>
- Dean, B. (2022). How many people use Twitter in 2022: New Twitter stats. Retrieved from <https://backlinko.com/twitter-users>
- Djordjevic, M. (2021). 27 Alarming fake news statistics on the effects of false reporting (2021 Edition). Retrieved from <https://letter.ly/fake-news-statistics/>
- Dyikuk, J. J., & Chinda, F. E. (2017). Digital terrestrial television: A critical assessment of the adventures and misadventures of Nigeria's digital switch over. *International Journal of Applied Research and Technology*. 6(12), 40– 49.

- Dyikuk, J. J. (2021). Digital authoritarianism in Nigeria. Retrieved from <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/opinion/497257-digital-authoritarianism-in-nigeria-by-justine-john-dyikuk.html>
- Egielewa, P. E. (n.d). The rhetoric of fake news as a smokescreen to muzzle critical voices: Issues at stake in Nigeria. Unpublished paper
- Eledan, P. (2011). Dr. Goodluck Jonathan's use of social media campaign. Retrieved from <http://prsync.com/goodluckjonathanforcom/>
- Faith, C. C., & Ijeoma, O. (2016). Social media as a political platform in Nigeria: A focus on electorates in South-Eastern Nigeria. *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science (IOSR-JHSS)*, 21(11), Ver. 1. 06-22.
- Fashagba, J. Y, Davies A. E., & Oshewolo S. (2014). The National Assembly. In: Ajayi, R. and Fashagba, J. Y (ed). *Understanding Government and Politics in Nigeria*, Ota, Department of Political Science and International Relations, Landmark University, Omuaran, Nigeria, pp. 99-126.
- Ibrahim, J., & Ibeanu, O. (2009). *Direct capture: The 2007 Nigerian elections and subversion of popular sovereignty*. Lagos: Centre for Democracy and Development.
- Iyengar, S., & Simon, A. F. (2000). New perspectives and evidence on political communication and campaign effects. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 51(1). 149-169.
- Jacob, J. (2021). Uses and abuses: How increased social media usage threatens Nigeria's democracy. Retrieved from [www.premiumtimesng.com](http://www.premiumtimesng.com)
- Jim-Nwoko, U. (2019). Nigerian elections: A history and a loss of memory. The Cable. Retrieved from [www.thecable.ng/Nigerian-elections-a-history-and-a-loss-of-memory](http://www.thecable.ng/Nigerian-elections-a-history-and-a-loss-of-memory)
- Katz, E., Gurevitch, M., & Haas, H. (1973). On the use of mass media for important things. *Amer. Soc. Rev.* 38: 164-181.
- Kietzmann, J., Hermkens, K., McCarthy, I., & Silvestre, B. (2011). Social media? Get serious understanding the functional building blocks of social media. *Business Horizons*. 54(3), [241-251]
- Manning, J. (2014.) Social media, definition and classes of. In K. Harvey (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of social media and politics*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. pp. 1158-1162.
- McAfee, A. P. 2006. Enterprise 2.0: The Dawn of Emergent Collaboration, MIT Sloan Management Review (Spring), pp. 21-28.
- McNair, B. (2017). *An Introduction to Political Communication* (6th ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315750293>.
- Media Effect Theories (n.d). Media effects theories. Retrieved from <https://open.lib.umn.edu/mediaandculture/chapter/2-2-media-effects-theories/>
- Mehraj, T., & Shamim, A. A. (2020). Concept of governance: An introduction. Retrieved [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/340535981\\_Concept\\_of\\_GovernanceAn\\_Introduction](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/340535981_Concept_of_GovernanceAn_Introduction)
- Nwafor, N., Chinedu, C. O., Egwu, A., Nwankwo, S., & Nweze, S. (2013). Social media and political participation in Africa: Issues, problems and prospects. In Des Wilson (Ed). *The*

- Media, Terrorism and Political Communication in Nigeria. African Council for Communication Education Thematic Book.
- Olafusi, E. (2022). Pantami: Communications ministry generated over N1trn revenue in two years. Retrieved from <https://www.thecable.ng/pantami-communications-ministry-generated-over-n1trn-revenue-in-two-years>
- Olorunnisola, A. A., & Douai, A. (2013). New media influence on social and political change in Africa. IGI Global. <https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-4666-4197-6>.
- Omotayo, F. O., & Folorunso, M. B. (2020). Use of social media for political participation by youths in Oyo State, Nigeria. *eJournal of eDemocracy & Open Government*. 12(1). DOI: <https://doi.org/10.29379/jedem.v12i1.585>.
- Orji, N. (2021). Elections, governance and development in Nigeria. *Social Scientia Journal of the Social Sciences and Humanities*. 6(2), 1- 96.
- Osinbajo, Y. (2021). Osinbajo calls for responsible use of social media. Retrieved from <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2021/05/osinbajo-calls-for-responsible-use-of-social-media/>
- Osinbajo, Y. (2021). Osinbajo calls for responsible use of social media. Retrieved from <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2021/05/osinbajo-calls-for-responsible-use-of-social-media/>
- Post, K., & Vickers, M. (1973). Structure and conflict in Nigeria: 1960-1966. London: Heinemann.
- Premium Times (2021). Editorial: Electronic voting and transmission of results: The imperative to safeguard democracy. Retrieved from <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/top-news/487818-editorial-electronic-voting-and-transmission-of-results-the-imperative-to-safeguard-democracy.html>
- Sahni, P. (2010). Administrative Theory. PHI Learning Private Limited: New Delhi.
- Suberu, R. (2007). Nigeria's muddled elections. *Journal of Democracy*. 18(4), 95-110.
- The World Bank (2019). Nigeria digital economy diagnostic: A plan for building Nigeria's inclusive digital future. Retrieved from <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/nigeria/publication/nigeria-digital-economy-diagnostic-a-plan-for-building-nigerias-inclusive-digital-future#>
- The World Factbook, (2022). Nigeria: Country summary. Retrieved from <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/nigeria/summaries>
- Tijani, K. (1986). Democracy, accountability and the state of the nation. In S. M. Abubakar and T. Edo, (eds). Nigeria: Republic in Ruins. Zaria: Ahmadu Bello University Press.
- Udogu, E. I. (1992). In search of political stability and survival: Toward Nigeria's third republic. Retrieved from <https://libres.uncg.edu>
- UNESCO. (2020). The pandemic and the infodemic: Disinformation in the modern age. Retrieved from <https://en.unesco.org/news/pandemic-and-infodemic-disinformation-modern-age>
- Vachhatani, J. (2021). Twitter blocked in Nigeria: Nigeria suspends Twitter indefinitely after the social platform stopped its President's account. Retrieved from

<https://www.republicworld.com/technology-news/social-media-news/nigeria-suspends-twitter-indefinitely-after-social-platform-blocks-its-presidents-account.html>

Wigand, R. T. (2010). Taming the Social Network Jungle. Presentation to the Seminar Series of the Center for Translational Neuroscience, February 23, 2010, University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences, Little Rock, Arkansas.

Wolfsfeld, G., Segev, E., & Sheaffer, T. (2013). Social media and the Arab Spring: Politics comes first. *The International Journal of Press/Politics*. 18(2) 115–137

World Bank (1992). 1992. Governance and Development. Washington, DC: The World Bank

cAfee, A. P. 2006. “Enterprise 2.0: The Dawn of Emergent Collaboration,” MIT Sloan Management

Carson, B. (2016). Social media as a research methodology. Retrieved from

<https://blog.marketresearch.com/social-media-as-a-research-methodology>