

Social Media and its Impact on Governance Building in Africa: The Nigeria Scenario

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Abstract

Overtime, the social media as contributed to the development of citizen's participation in government, as it has the potentials to create public awareness and interactions between people in a simple form and different means. Majority of citizens are users of one form of social media or the other in which they interact on daily basis and Nigeria have been experiencing bad leadership, corruption, and economic problems due to bad governance without citizen's consensus and consent. The objective of this paper is to access the role of social media on consensus and consent building in governance as citizen's full flagged participation will guarantee accountability, transparency and responsiveness in government. The paper made use of secondary sources of data. The paper recommends that free access to information, responsible journalism and citizen's participation will aid in governance building.

Keywords: Social media • Governance • Participation • Citizens

Introduction

Social media has occupied a strong position in the process of disseminating information in today's modern societies. Its applicability for interactive sections in consensus and consent building in the governance process cannot be also underestimated. Social media or the news media has become the strongest check on the government's power [1]. As the result of the proliferation of different types of social media platforms and the generality in usability among citizens, social media as aid governance process as the interaction between the government and its citizens are more easily accessible through these social media channels.

In today's contemporary world, social media has become the world's new order as it serves as the major avenue in which different interest groups come together to form consensus and arriving at consent on a particular issue be it politically, socially and economically despite their geographical locations. The emergence of social media is quite a recent phenomenon and became popularized only when the Internet became ubiquitous and accessible to consumers worldwide, giving rise to the so-called Network Society [2]. The constitutive impacts of the power or influence of social media can be seen from the political crisis in the United States of American U.S.A during the Donald Trump administration and also to the ban of

Twitter in Nigeria by the federal government [3]. Social media has but negative and positive impacts depending on the side it confers. It was asserted that the negative factors that hinder social media usage in the governance process include the additional cost of using information technology to collect information that aid in organizing political rallies, civil protests, agitations for reforms on economic and social empowerment and to hold the elite accountable [4]. It has helped in diverse ways in the sustenance and promotion of governance due to its roles in ensuring accountability, transparency, responsiveness and equality in the governance process. Accountability, responsiveness and openness are constantly increasing through mobile connectivity which is made possible through social media [5].

Over the years, social media has served as a watchdog to the activities of government as for much government information is easily accessible and publicize for citizens consent and consensus. The access to information from legislative plenary, executive seating's and court rulings from institutions of government and organizational policies, budget, recruitment and services have been made more publicly due to social media which in long run aids good governance through transparency and accountability. The increase in the public usage of social media is taking the most dominant form of social movement on issues affecting the peculiarity or generality of people in the country. For example, through the activities by Biafrans (IPOB) social media as making it possible for

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reactions by citizens living abroad to also have consent on what is going on in the southeast region of Nigeria. Also, the issue of insecurity in all spheres is it political, economic and social in Nigeria has been giving concern and attention due to the publicizing of its effects from within and outside Nigeria on social Media. The growing campaign of violence and insecurity in Nigeria has not only hinders self-peace in the country but has also constituted and contributed to the political, economic and social instability within and abroad [6]. Social media as providing for a means of communicative power were by poor leadership, illegitimate demand, and oppression by the government are tackled through consent and consensus among the majority of the citizens. On the side of the government, social media as also serve as a means to gather intelligence about planned decisions of its citizens and also its enemies. For example, before the commencement of the End Sars protest the Nigerian government through the help of social media as gathered information about the End Sars protest. The sharing of videos of the Special Anti-Robbery Squared (SARS) on social media platforms has led to widespread protests across Nigeria [7]. So the roles of social media in consensus and consent building in governance cannot be quantified and underestimated especially in democratic settings.

Literature Review

The concept of social media

The concept of social media has been defined by various scholars based on their understanding and respective point of view. The concept of social media allows for an open web-based and user-friendly application which provides for new possibilities in the co-creation of content, social networking, the sharing of text and relevance, and aid connectivity and collective intelligence gathering [8]. In other words, social media provide for an open platform that permits friendly relationships and the ability to share information and consent with the hope of reaching a consensus on public issues. Social media involves the activities of online interactions for the sharing of interests and activities, or those who are interested in exploring the interests and activities of others [9]. It was asserted that social media refers to a conglomeration of online-based applications that aid ideological and technological foundations of web 2.0 and that foster the creation and exchange of user-generated content [10]. It has been defined as "social media as a form of electronic communication (such as websites for social networking and micro-blogging) through which user create online communities to share information, ideas, personal message, and other content (such as videos) [11]. UNESCO has defined social media as the mechanism that fosters the human relationship through technology and allowing for better, faster and more constant social interactions among its users [12]. Lastly, Social media is also defined as the modern information network system possible through technology, and use the form of communication to create interactions within users produced content, and where interpersonal relationships are created and maintained [13].

The concept of governance

Governance has been described as an approach or perspective that focuses on state, societal institutions and the relationship

between them as well as on how rules are made in a society that is accepted as legitimate to enhance values that are sought by individuals and groups within the society [14]. Governance is seen as "As a system of government based on good leadership, respect for rule of law and due process and the accountability of political leadership to the electorate as well as transparency in the operations of government" [15]. It has been posited that the characteristic of good governance include, popular participation, rule of law, transparency, responsiveness, and economic consensus-oriented others are equity and inclusiveness, effectiveness and efficiency and accountability [16]. It is also seen that governance as a fundamental process through which the lives and dreams of the citizenry are collectively pursued by deliberate and systematic strategies and policies, for the realization of their maximum potentials [17]. The World Bank Institute (2012) conceptualization, governance can be said to refer to the way power is exercised in the management of the country's economic and social resources to the development of a society.

The relationship between social media and governance building

In today's global society, there is nothing as important as information as it enables one to predict, correct and engaged with others in any sphere of life. Information through social media is regarded as a strong tool of awareness and interactions among youths, as it serves as their major meeting and discussing point on whether to agree or disagree on particular social issues without coming together physically. Consensus and consent building in governance has no doubt been aided and made possible through social media as it widely and commonly means of interaction among the youthful population of any country. The uprising in the use of social media tools has facilitated a new participatory digital sphere that allows many-to-many communication where users can dialogically interact and collaborate to the creation of content shaping the flow of communication [18]. Also, it was asserted that the emergence of social media and its accessibility through phones has continuously increased and enhanced participative governance among the youths [19]. Through these phones, individual citizens have access to influence and give their opinion through their respective social media platforms in which their aggregated opinions lead to consensus on the matter. The roles of social media have impacts on both developed or developing countries, however, their impact is very much needed in the developing country due to several reasons which include political apathy, poor leadership, and poor governance. That is why social media should get penetration potential in African it will help in addressing the glaring policy syndromes such as poor governance [4]. As we know social media is a variant of Information Communication Technology (ICT), social media will help speed up the level of information transfers which on the other side will facilitate openness, transparency, and accountability in governance as well as the diffusion of information between civil societies, various arms and ministries, departments and agencies of government, [20]. Information transfers have the ability to restrict and guide the behavior of politicians due to their constant fears that if such information comes to the awareness of citizens, it may actually be of negative consequences to them. It is also posited that the impacts of the burgeoning diffusion of information transfers in Africa have helped in the reduction of corrupt practices on the part of those in the political and bureaucratic

public positions [21]. Among the role of social media is that it has served as a watchdog within the government itself and also among political parties without even talking of the citizens. Social media over time as become the mirror and medium which reflects and also bring to hearing the issues happening in society. However when control by the state or owned by the elite it may be used negatively to promote their ideological behaviors. Social media information can be abused by incumbent governments to limit accountability and promote misinformation [22]. Therefore they need to access information and the need for independent media will guarantee and foster the role of the social building in consensus and consent building in governance [23-26].

Conclusion and Recommendations

Access to information is the highest means of acquiring knowledge and measuring events in any political or economic system. The role of social media is important due to its ability to change the governance process as it provides an avenue for more citizens' participation through awareness of everyday government business. In essence, the emergence and applicability of such mediums in passing public information to citizens has further impacted communities, institutions, and governments worldwide. The information about state political systems and political activities is been brought to the citizens hearing through social media platforms. Social media tools have the momentum to foster societal roles and increasing citizen participation in democratic processes. Information plays an important role in the governance process as it helps in improving good governance through ensuring accountability, openness, transparency and responsiveness as government's actions and decisions are influenced and monitored by citizens through social media. The impact of social media will help curb corrupt practices and also improves the democratic system of government has more mechanisms for promoting governance that will be brought closer to the hearing and notice of the public. Many third-world nations still remain backward due to their lack of information about their rights and what going on in other parts of the globe. Social media will help strengthen transparency in the electoral process as information about events will be transmitted easily from and within different communities before it has been tempered with usually in the third world nations. Social media has helped in protecting lives and properties in times of insecurity as information is easily transmitted through different platforms to pass security alerts.

Independent journalism should be emphasized among journalists so has to carry out their work without bias in other for citizens to have access to rightful information across their respective platforms. Secondly, there should be more active participation of the population in social media usage. Also, the freedom of speech and access to government information should be strengthened and fourthly, citizens should always try to analyze and authenticate the source or means of information before acting on it. Law and regulations regarding the posting of ill information should be strictly adhered to and defaulters should be allowed to face the consequences.

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