



Harnessing the Potentials of the New Media for Effective Governance in Nigeria: Perception of Netizens in Anambra State, Nigeria

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Abstract: *The concept of the global village has resulted in the globalised media environment. As a development that has significantly transformed information dissemination and communication, the New Communication Technologies (NCIS), which gave rise to the global village philosophy, is welding great influence in the society today. In journalism practice, health care service, agriculture, industries, environmental service, the influence of the new media is ubiquitous. It is against this background that this study assessed the potentials of the new media for effective governance in Nigeria. This is premised against the background that the citizens deserve to know government policies, activities and programmes. Government, in turn, owes the citizens a duty to carry them along in policy formulation and implementation. The objectives of this paper were to find out the dominant media of communication through which citizens get information about government policies/programmes, and to ascertain the signification influences of the new media in generating the necessary feedback loop for government. The study was anchored on the Bakhtins theory of dialogism and the technological determinism theory. The study adopted a survey research approach and used the netizens population in Anambra state. A sample size of 362 was determined for study from a population of 89,255 students in Anambra state. Using questionnaire as the research instrument, the data gathered were presented on simple frequency distribution tables, and subsequently analysed. Result obtained from this survey revealed the new media nurture and streamline democratic governance in Nigeria.*

Keywords: *Effective, Governance, Harnessing, Media, New, Potentials*

I. Introduction

The one-time American President, Thomas Jefferson, in 1787, made a critical statement that reveals the vantage position of the media in governance. According Padwick (2020), Jefferson posits that, "Were it left to me to decide whether we should have a government without newspapers or newspapers without government, I should not hesitate a moment to prefer the latter"? Padwick (2020) informs that Jefferson, while writing to his friend and fellow Virginian, Edward Carrington, in 1787, made the statement as an important

insight into the future president's opinion on freedom of speech, the public's right to criticize their government, and government accountability (Aondover et al., 2022). In the said letter, Jefferson's concern revealed that governments would, if left unchecked by a vigilant and informed people, inevitably become tyrannical, and that the newspapers were vital guardians to that end.

In participatory democratic society, the media are seen as indispensable institutions by both the government and the governed. While the government needs to educate, sensitise and mobilise the people to support her policies, programmes, and activities, the citizens rely on the media to make constructive inputs and/or criticisms that will streamline government policies to align with the yearnings and aspirations of the general public. This synergy is germane because the success or otherwise of any government policy/programme depends on the citizens' buy-in into the policy/programme (Hile et al., 2023). Joe Biden, in 2023 Press Week, further underscores the importance of the media for democracy and development, when he avers that:

Congress shall pass no law abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press, because a free press is a pillar of democracy." It allows our government and our society to be self-critical and self-correcting. It educates, illuminates, exposes, and uncovers. It serves as a guardian of truth. Journalists give all of us, as citizens, the chance to know the truth about our countries, ourselves, our governments. That makes us better. It makes us stronger. It gives voice to the voiceless, exposes injustice, and holds leaders like me accountable.

Indisputably, therefore, the priority a nation accords the acquisition, storage, retrieval, management and utilisation of information is an important indicator of its level of democratic practice. As Porter (2022) succinctly posits, information is indeed, being treated as a resource like energy and matter. Porter (2022) argues that information is a factor of production as authentic and critical as capital and labour. For this reason, the media of communication are critical in democratic society. Therefore, this paper examined the potentials of the new media in effective governance in Nigeria (Aondover et al., 2025).

The idea of harnessing the potentials of the social media for effective governance in Nigeria is in alliance with the concept of the Open Government Partnership (OGP), which is a global effort to make governments better. Formally launched on September 20, 2011, when the 8 founding governments (Brazil, Indonesia, Mexico, Norway, Philippines, South Africa, United Kingdom, and United States) endorsed the Open Government Declaration, the OGP is a new multilateral initiative that aims to secure concrete commitments from governments to promote transparency, empower citizens, fight corruption, and harness new technologies to strengthen governance. While speaking at the launching of the OGP, the then American President, Barack Obama states that:

We pledge to be more transparent at every level -- because more information on government activity should be open, timely, and freely available to people. We need to pledge to engage more of our citizens in decision-making -- because it makes government more effective and responsive. We pledge to implement the highest standards of integrity -- because those in power must serve the people, not themselves. And we pledge to increase access to technology -- because in this digital century, access to information is a right that is universal.

Also speaking on the OGP opening Session, on April 2012, the then American Secretary of States, Hillary Clinton, informs that “We believe that countries with open governments, open economies, and open societies will increasingly flourish (Idris & Msughter, 2022). They will become more prosperous, healthier, more secure, and more peaceful. "Citizens want more transparent, effective and accountable governments—with institutions that empower citizens and are responsive to their aspirations.

Nigeria joined the initiative in 2016, and has been working to implement reform commitments in relevant thematic areas. Each member country co-creates (equal partnership between government and civil society organisations) its National Action Plan (NAP) with ambitious reform commitments. Nigeria co-created its first, second and third NAPs in 2016, 2019 and 2022 respectively. Nigeria is currently implementing the third NAP which is to run from 2023 to 2025.

So far, the NAPs have been developed along the following thematic interests: Fiscal transparency, extractive transparency, access to information, governance, anti-corruption and asset recovery, citizens’ engagement and participation, improved public service delivery, inclusion, climate change and Environment (Obasi & Msughter, 2023). Nigeria has successfully instituted key reforms from the implementation of the NAP I (2017 – 2019) and NAP II (2019 – 2022). Among them are: Increased Compliance with the Freedom of Information Act, Increased Civic Space, Increased Citizens’ Participation in the Budget Cycle, Increased openness in the Budget process (National and States), and The Nigeria Open Contracting Portal (NOCOPO).

The Internet and social media have tremendously improved access to information, reduced the fear of witch-hunting and increased the citizens' rate of participation in government activities, hence the important part of democracy (government of the people) as its democratization substance resuscitated. For instance, since 2001 when Nigeria first Global System Mobile (GSM) was accepted through the Mobile Telecommunication Network (MTN), Nigeria's Fourth Republic ushered in mobile phones and the Internet along-side several social media platforms – a development that has tremendously increased the rate of participation of citizens in policy making and essentially governance (Kurfi et al., 2021). Thus, access to information is at the tip of citizens' fingers, especially the educated ones increased. In fact, it has checkmated government on several occasions.

The Arab spring started on social media, and it ousted leaders in Egypt, Tunisia, Libya and even the major trouble triggered mechanism in Syria. In Nigeria, reversal of fuel subsidy policy removal of former President Goodluck Jonathan (in 2012) and the mobilisation for EndSars protest in 2022 were actualised through social media mobilisation (Kombol, 2023). It is no more news that platforms on social media are increasing with thousands of new subscribers daily.

According to Sasu (2024), Nigeria is the leading country in Africa, and the 9th largest Internet user in the world at 63 million unique users. The World Bank Group (2024) reveals that Internet user penetration in Nigeria saw a slight increase between the years 2018 and 2022, going from around 26 percent to over 38 percent. As of 2022, the estimated number of Internet users in the country was more than eighty-three million (Kurfi et al., 2023). Moreover, the share of the Nigerian population using the Internet is expected to grow to approximately 48 percent by 2027. As for mobile Internet user penetration in Nigeria, there is a slight increase too. As of 2023, around 40 percent of the Nigerian population was already

using a mobile device to access the internet. In 2027, 51 percent of all Internet users are expected to use a mobile device for Internet access.

As the rate of social media participation is increasing, the level of awareness of the government activities and the involvement of the citizens in governance also increases. People, especially, the youth, show interest in monitoring the activities of the government while critiquing its policies and officials' operations (Mojaye & Aondover, 2022). However, harnessing the potentials of social media for effective governance involves the action of making information accessible to people, upon which those people will act upon without fear or favour, and without hesitation to do so. The belief is that social media has created a platform for democratization.

Scholars have discussed and agreed that it is a mechanism for participation, advocacy and social change (Hari, 2014; Kombol, 2014). Put it as it has appeared: "How has the social media served as a veritable tool of mobilization for participatory government?", or "how has the social media influenced the participation of citizens in government activities?", or "what are the major contents of discussion, especially by the youths and elites on social media?", or how do we enhance the usage of social media as a mechanism of democratic sustenance in Nigeria?" or how has the government used the social media to enlighten, educate and mobilize favourable public opinions for her policies/programmes.? These, among others, are the puzzles this paper interrogated.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

In emerging democracies, across the globe, indifference attitudes to politics and government activities by citizens has been acknowledged as a bane of participatory democracy. There has been culture of either fear of intimidation or mindset of non-performing system, which resulted in low interest and total apathy in the affairs of government, importantly by its youth population. On their part, government policies and programmes are shrouded in secrecy, as government make policies and programmes without recourse to inputs by the citizens.

However, the emergence of social media breathes a new life into the citizens' participation drive where millions of Nigerians are domiciled, lamenting and scrutinizing the major government policies as well as political interest. Advent of social media have heightened the interest of citizens in governance. Social media have provided citizens the opportunity to involve and participate in the activities of government. This is considered a remarkable development to the country's democratic regime and its sustenance, as there is no way citizens would be active on those platforms like Facebook and twitter and such citizens would not be participating in some of the important issues of the country. Many government ministries/agencies, including governors and the country's President, now have websites and do interact with people on Facebook and X (formerly Twitter), either directly or through their assistants.

In agreement with the thrust of the Nigeria's e-government master plan (to utilise Information and Communication Technologies, ICTs, to drive transparency in governance and improve the quality and cost effectiveness in public service delivery), these efforts must have assisted Nigeria's upward movement to 140th out of 193 in the UN E-Government Development Survey 2022, with E-Government Development Index, EGDI, of 0.4525 2022. Nigeria, also, ranked 117 out of 193 in the UN E-Participation Index of 0.3065 in 2022. Comparatively, Nigeria ranked 162 out of 193 in 2014.

These are positive developments in the direction of good governance and democratic consolidation. However, one may not be able to ascertain the mechanism named 'Social Media' as important and a veritable tools for effective governance if some of the puzzles surrounding this enquiry are not carefully answered.

1.2 Objective of the Study

The overall objective of this paper was to harness the potentials of new media for effective governance in Nigeria. The specific objectives of the paper were:

1. To find out if the respondents hear and view government's policies, programmes and activities in the new media;
2. To ascertain the proportion of the respondents who are sufficiently educated and enlightened about government's policies, programmes and activities in the new media;
3. To find out if the respondents use the new media to make inputs in government's policies, programmes and activities, and
4. To find out if the respondents perceive the new media as veritable platforms for effective governance.

II. Review of Literature

2.1 Theoretical Underpinnings

Two theories, the Bakhtin's theory of Dialogism (Dialogic) theory and the Technological Determinism theory were used for this paper. The theory of Dialogism, or simply dialogic, was propounded by the Russian Philosopher, Mikhail Bakhtin in 1963, in his books, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* and the *Dialogic Imagination – four Essays by M. M. Bakhtin*. Dialogic refers to the use of conversation or shared dialogue to explore the meaning of something, as opposed to monologic, which refers to one entity with all the information simply giving it to others without exploration and clarification of meaning through discussion. The word "dialogic" relates to, or is characterised by dialogue and its use. A dialogic is communication presented in the form of dialogue. Dialogic processes refer to implied meaning in words uttered by a speaker and interpreted by a listener. Dialogic works carry on a continual dialogue that includes interaction with previous information presented. The term is used to describe concepts in literary theory and analysis as well as in philosophy.

Dialogism is defined as “any negotiated exchange of ideas and opinions” Dialogic theory argues that organisations should be willing to interact with publics in honest and ethical ways in order to create effective organisation-public communication channels. Bakhtinian dialogism refers to a philosophy of language and a social theory. Meaning comes about through dialogue at whatever level that dialogue takes place. Nothing can exist without meaning; everything has meaning.

According to McQuail and Deuze (2022), Dialogic as an orientation has five features

- **Mutuality**, or the recognition of organisation-public-relations. Without the publics, organisations have no purpose. Seeking collaboration through the publics through dialogue will contribute towards successful relationship building.
- **Propinquity**, or the temporality and spontaneity of interactions with the public. By even asking the publics for their input before the decision making process could be beneficial depending on the organisation/activity/idea. The utilisation of a dialogic loop online is a way for the public's voices to be heard. As well as, making the organisation present to its publics.

- **Empathy**, or the supportiveness and confirmation of public goals and interests. Support is extremely important. Being able to collaborate to maintain a communal mindset is essential. The idea of a communal mindset shows the importance in building the community, not solely the organisation.
- **Risk**, or the intention to communicate with publics on their own terms. The amount of information shared or the type of information shared with another organisation or publics leads to vulnerability and unexpected consequences.
- **Commitment**, or the degree to which an organisation gives itself over to dialogue, interpretation, and understanding in its interactions with publics. Even if someone does not agree with the views of another, one must acknowledge the view as valid and try to find middle ground.

Kent and Taylor (2020) proposed five dialogic principles which could guide organisations to establish dialogic relationships with publics on websites.

- **Dialogic loop:** A dialogic loop allows publics to query organisations and provides organisations with the opportunity to respond to questions, concerns, and problems.
- **Usefulness of Information:** Websites should make efforts to post information of general value to all publics.
- **Generation of Return Visits:** Websites should include features that make them attractive for repeat visits such as updated information, changing issues, and special forums.
- **The Intuitiveness / Ease of Interface:** Websites ought to provide conveniences for visitors to figure out and understand. Tables of contents are useful and should be well organised and hierarchical.
- **Conservation of Visitors:** Websites should contain only essential links with clearly marked paths for visitors to return to the sites.

The theory of dialogism is suitable for this paper because effective governance requires that both the government and the governed must come to terms, through an engagement, for policy formulation and implementation. The second theory for this study is the Technological Determinism Theory. The American Sociologist and Economist, Thorstein Veblen (1857-1929) coined the term, “Technological Determinism,” as a theory subscribed to by hyperglobalists, who claim that as consequences of the wide availability of technology, accelerated globalisation is inevitable. Technological Determinism theory has been summarised by Merritt Roe Smith (1994, as cited in Heder, 2021, p.119), as “the belief in technology as the key governing force in society.”

Again, Bruce Bimber (2000, as cited in McQuail & Dueze, 2019), summarised Technological Determinism Theory as the idea that technological developments determines social change, “It changes the way people think and how they interact with others and can be described as a three-word logical position: technology determines history.” Langdon Winner (2001) provides two hypotheses for the technological Determinism Theory:

1. The technology of a given society is a fundamental influencer of the various ways in which a society exists; and
2. Changes in technology are the primary and most important source that leads to change in the society.

The Technological Determinism theory is suitable for this study because the evolution of the media of communication has great impacts on the society. This is reflected in the statement by McLuhan (1964) that “the medium is the message” which means that the medium used to communicate influences the mind of the receiver (Msughter, 2019). The

introduction of new media has significantly improved the interface between the government and the citizen, hence improving democratic participation.

2.2 Conceptual Clarification

Nwammuo (2022) informs that the phrase "new media" became widely used in the middle of the 1990s, as part of a sales pitch for the influx of interactive CD-ROMs for entertainment and education. According to Nwammuo (2022), new media are communication technologies that enable or enhance interaction between users as well as interaction between users and content. The new media technologies, sometimes known as Web 2.0, include a wide range of web-related communication tools such as blogs, wikis, online social networking, virtual worlds, and other social media platforms (Aondover et al., 2024).

For Achor (2021), the phrase "new media" refers to computational media that share material online and through computers. New media, otherwise called social media or digital media, refers to a combination of tools and utilities that allow the communication of information among participants in an online network. It is an enhancement of the advances in Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and aptly refers to computer-mediated communication. We mean those Internet-based tools and services that allow users to engage with each other, generate content, distribute, and search for information online (Msughter & Pate, 2021). These tools and utilities are presented as websites which enable a user to interact with other users, sharing information about themselves or that are of concern to their shared interests. The most commonly used among these online network platforms in Nigeria include Facebook, X, Youtube, WhatsApp, WeChat, Instagram and Snapchat.

New media inspire new ways of thinking about older media. Media do not replace one another in a clear, linear succession, instead evolving in a more complicated network of interconnected feedback loops (Msughter et al., 2023). What is different about new media is how they specifically refashion traditional media, and how older media refashion themselves to meet the challenges of new media.

Writers and philosophers such as Marshall McLuhan were instrumental in the development of media theory during this period which is now famous declaration in *Understanding Media –The Extension of Man*, that "the medium is the message," drew attention to the too often ignored influence media and technology themselves, rather than their "content," have on humans' experience of the world and on society broadly (Onyejelem et al., 2024).

Shipiro (2000, as cited in Ajah, 2022), argues that the "emergence of new, digital technologies signals a potentially radical shift of who is in control of information, experience and resources," adding that whilst the "new media" have technical capabilities to pull in one direction, economic and social forces pull back in the opposite direction. According to Neuman (2004, as cited in Ajah, 2022), "we are witnessing the evolution of a universal interconnected network of audio, video, and electronic text communications that will blur the distinction between interpersonal and mass communication; and between public and private communication." Consequently, it has been the contention of scholars such as Kellner (2004) and James Bohman that new media, and particularly the Internet, will provide the potential for a democratic postmodern public sphere, in which citizens can participate in well informed, non-hierarchical debate pertaining to their social structures.

2.3 Effective or Good Governance Defined

Governance is "the process of decision-making and the process by which decisions are implemented (or not implemented)." Governance in this context can apply to corporate, international, national, or local governance as well as the interactions between other sectors of society. Effective/Good governance is the process of measuring how public institutions conduct public affairs and manage public resources and guarantee the realization of human rights in a manner essentially free of abuse and corruption and with due regard for the rule of law. The concept of "good governance" thus emerges as a model to compare ineffective economies or political bodies with viable economies and political bodies (Oreoluwa et al., 2024). Guanah (2019) asserts that good governance propelled by good and disciplined leadership is an essential factor in the development of Africa, and that if those at the helm of affairs do not give the right leadership, development will remain a mirage (p.412).

The concept centers on the responsibility of governments and governing bodies to meet the needs of the masses as opposed to select groups in society. Due to the fact that countries often described as "most successful" are liberal-democracy states, concentrated in Europe and the Americas, good governance standards often measure other state institutions against these states (Owens-Ibie & Aondover, 2024). Aid organisations and the authorities of developed countries often will focus the meaning of "good governance" to a set of requirements that conform to the organisation's agenda, making "good governance" imply many different things in many different contexts.

According to Fukuyama (2013), the ability of the state and the independence of the bureaucracy are the two factors that determine whether governance is excellent or terrible. They also complement one another in that more autonomy should be allowed when the state is more capable, such as through tax collection, since bureaucrats can carry out their duties well without much guidance. However, less latitude and greater regulation are preferable in states with lower levels of capability (Vitalis et al., 2024). A further perspective on effective governance is based on results. There is no better way to think about good governance than through deliverables, which are precisely the ones demanded by citizens, like security, health, education, water, contract enforcement, property protection, environmental protection, and the right to vote and fair wages. This is because governments operate with the intention of providing public goods to their constituents (Aondover, 2024).

Similarly, good governance might be approximated with provision of public services in an efficient manner, higher participation given to certain groups in the population like the poor and the minorities, the guarantee that citizens have the opportunity of checks and balance on the government, the establishment and enforcement of norms for the protection of the citizens and their property and the existence of independent judiciary systems (Yar'Adua et al., 2023). Lawson (2011) in his review of Rothstein's book, "The quality of government: corruption, social trust, and inequality in international perspective," mentions that the author relates good governance to the concept of impartiality, which is basically when the bureaucrats perform their tasks following the public interest rather than their self-interest. Lawson (2011) differs with him in that this impartial application of law ignores important factors like the economic liberalism, which matters due to its relation with economic growth. Rithmire (2023), in *Precarious Ties: Business and the State in Authoritarian Asia* explores the delicate relationship between capitalists and autocrats in the region and further opines that the efficiency of one-party governments might seem appealing, but leaders need a deep understanding of a country's power structure and "moral economy,"

2.4 Characteristics of Good Governance

The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific-UNESCAP (2009) has identified the following as the major characteristics of good governance. These features are that good governance is participatory, consensus oriented, accountable, transparent, responsive, effective and efficient, equitable and inclusive and follows the rule of law (Msughter & Pate, 2021). It assures that corruption is minimised, the views of minorities are taken into consideration and that the voices of the most vulnerable in society are heard in decision-making. It is also responsive to the present and future needs of society.

1. Participation: Good governance is participatory. Anyone affected by or interested in a decision should have the opportunity to participate in the process for making that decision. Participation by both men and women is a key cornerstone of good governance (Aondover et al., 2022). Participation could be either direct or through legitimate and trusted intermediate institutions or representatives. It is important to point out that representative democracy does not necessarily mean that the concerns of the most vulnerable in society would be taken into consideration in decision making. Participation needs to be informed and organised. This means freedom of association and expression on the one hand and an organised civil society on the other hand.

2. Rule of Law: Good governance follows the rule of law. This means that decisions are consistent with relevant legislation or common law. Good governance requires fair legal frameworks that are enforced impartially. It also requires full protection of human rights, particularly those of minorities. Impartial enforcement of laws requires an independent judiciary and an impartial and incorruptible police force.

3. Transparency: Good governance is transparent, hence people should be able to follow and understand the decision-making process. Transparency means that decisions taken and their enforcement are done in a manner that follows rules and regulations. It also means that information is freely available and directly accessible to those who will be affected by such decisions and their enforcement. It also means that enough information is provided and that it is provided in easily understandable forms and media. This means that they will be able to clearly see how and why a decision was made, what information, advice and consultation council considered, and which legislative requirements was followed.

4. Responsiveness: Good governance is responsive, thus requiring that institutions and processes should try to serve all stakeholders within a reasonable timeframe. Thus, to ensure good governance, government should always try to serve the needs of the entire community while balancing competing interests in a timely, appropriate and responsive manner.

5. Consensus Oriented: There are several actors and as many viewpoints in a given society. Good governance requires mediation of the different interests in society to reach a broad consensus in society on what is in the best interest of the general public and how this can be achieved. This can only result from an understanding of the historical, cultural and social contexts of a given society or community.

6. Equity and Inclusiveness: A society's wellbeing depends on ensuring that all its members feel that they have a stake in it and do not feel excluded from the mainstream of society. This requires all groups, but particularly the most vulnerable, have opportunities to improve or maintain their wellbeing.

7. Effectiveness and Efficiency: Good governance means that processes and institutions produce results that meet the needs of society while making the best use of resources at their disposal. In this regard, government should implement decisions and follow processes that make the best use of the available people, resources and time to ensure the best possible results for their community. The concept of efficiency in the context of good governance also covers the sustainable use of natural resources and the protection of the environment.

8. Accountability: Accountable is a key requirement of good governance that should not only focus on governmental institutions but also the private sector and civil society organisations must be accountable to the public and to their institutional stakeholders. This is because an organisation or an institution is accountable to those who will be affected by its decisions or actions. However, because accountability cannot be enforced without transparency and the rule of law, it becomes pertinent that government or organisation leaders live up to their obligation to report, explain and be answerable for the consequences of decisions it has made on behalf of the community it represents (UNESCAP, 2009). The UNDP added another one to make it nine.

9. Strategic Vision: Leaders and the public should have a broad and long-term perspective on good governance and human development, together with a sense of what is needed for such development. There should also be an understanding of the historical, cultural and social complexities in which that perspective is grounded (UNDP, 1997).

It is in keeping with the above adumbrated characteristics of good governance that Anton (nd) informs that the substrate of good governance asserts that (1) Governance refers not only to the conduct of government but also to the selection of political players and the dynamics of making and implementing political decisions, (2) Political decision-making is not the preserve of governmental authority but involves the civil society and the private sector as well; (3) In countries with a fragile government potential, the importance of structures that are informal and anterior to the state rises correspondingly (4) Good governance refers to the quality of political processes and decision-making organs (5) Good governance means power and authority conferred by a sovereign people (6) Ultimately, good governance aims to secure sustainable development and the welfare of the people.

2.5 New Media and Effective Governance

There are a lot of advantages associated with using social media in government because the usage:

- **Creates the means to improve governance.** Social media provides easy publication and rapid spread of information. For citizens, by embedding government information in social media provides previously unimagined access to government and its officials. For government, it offers the ability to rapidly poll public opinion and perhaps more importantly, forecast broader, societal trends.
- **Opens up access to government and government officials** and create new possibilities for community driven initiatives. It makes sense for government to enable and facilitate a partnership culture for this to occur. (Does this perhaps, mean a new era of Public Private Partnerships?)
- **Saves time and money.** Providing information through social media channels offers real efficiencies in creating faster, easier and cheaper access to information, particularly to younger voters who tend use, read and operate in social media spaces.

- **Creates new ways of working.** Online collaboration across government departments and with citizens could force change on the way government operates and develops policy.

2.6 Empirical Review

In a study with the title, “*The Effect of Social Media on Good Governance in Nigeria,*” Hasiya and Abdullahi (2020) posit that the explosion of social media in recent times, has dramatically transformed the way information is created, disseminated distributed and consumed. In an age when information equates to power, a diversity of opinion can actually lead to more creative problem solving and more equitable outcomes in a society. Undoubtedly this outcome will in turn lead to good governance and democratic consolidation in many countries across the globe (Nigeria inclusive).

In fact, looking at the recent election in Nigeria, where we just experienced a smooth transition from a democratic administration to another democratic government is a sign that sustainable democracy have come to stay as efforts are continually made by all the stakeholders to put democracy in proper shape. In the last sixteen years, new democratic institutions are being setup and nurtured, politicians are being groomed, political parties are being structured, coalitions and mergers are now visible insignia of our politics, governance ideological framework are being worked out. In these tasks of fanning the ambers good governance in Nigeria, political communication continues to play critical roles.

The allusion that social media can foster free and fair elections and promote stable and sustainable democracy in the ethno-political-cum religious crisis-ridden regions of Africa is no longer a utopian conception; but a provable fact. The empowering and unrelenting growth of Internet across Africa, the use of social media in politics has continued to grow in the world in recent time. Many scholars have acknowledge that it have direct impact on good governance. It is base against this backdrop that this paper used social responsibility as a theoretical framework to justify the thrust of the paper.

More so the study adopts the secondary data analysis as its methodology. Some of the recommendations of this paper includes, that the benefits of the use of social media outweigh its challenges, as such, the civil society should adopt its use, and equally encourage other election stakeholders to use social media in subsequent elections in Nigeria. Also, the Electoral Act should be enhanced to provide specific guidelines on the use of social media in other to consolidate democracy

Mamokhere (2020), in a paper titled, “Examining the role of new media in upholding good governance in a democratic system: is there nexus amid media and good governance?” aimed at examining the role of new media [internet] in upholding good governance and democracy in the South African new dispensation. In this 21st century and Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) era, the role of new media have become complex and biasness, which raises many questions, if their role is relevant in fostering good governance and democracy. It is commonly understood that democracy can generate good governance because academics agree with the idea that democracy is an essential part of good governance. The more transparent and accountable the public institutions are, the better the quality of the government is. This is the reason why many international development organisations promote good governance via the promotion of greater transparency, rule of law, and democratic accountability.

In brief, new media play the watchdog role for the governing system of a country. In this regards, the new media examine the government and those involved in governance. Moreover, new media also promote policy-making as well as the decision-making process. The new media expose policy failures and successes, maladministration, corruption, and scandals in the public and private sector. South African government has been bidding to ensure good governance in the country since the democratic regime in 1994. The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, makes provision for good governance through the adherence of constitutional principles enshrined in Chapter 10 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996. This paper adopted the qualitative research design in the form of documents review to uncover the fundamental role of new media in enhancing governance principles. It embraced the Media Ecology Theory (MET) developed by Marshall McLuhan (1964) which aims to comprehend the social impact of technology and communication. Through an extensive literature review, the results of the paper indicate that new media plays the role of a watch-dog in promoting good governance and democracy.

Abayomi, (2020) conducted a study, titled, *“Democratic Regimes and Social Media in Nigeria: Examining the Substance of Youth Participation in Governance”*, which investigated 'the extent advent of social media enhance citizens' participation in governance, especially among the youths. The paper posits that citizens' participation in governance in Nigeria has been greatly affected by the system of autocratic, undemocratic and even democratic regimes. These regimes have inculcated fear into the youth and have not provided a free flow platform for transparency, accountability, and feedback from its citizens, particularly the youth. However, the emergence of social media breathes a new life into the citizens' participation drive. While survey and content analysis were used to elicit information from 100 randomly selected respondents in Ibadan North Local Government, Theory of Digital Democracy was adopted as theoretical framework. Findings reveals that the majority of the respondents' (58%) contents posted for the past three (3) months were connected to political issues, corruption-related issues, religion, and political personalities. Facebook is the most preferred social network among the respondents.

It was, therefore, confirmed that social media users in Nigeria are tremendously increasing while information on politics and government activities is reflecting easily on it in the discussions among the citizens. The paper concludes that the Internet and social media have reduced the fear of witch-hunting, and increased the citizens' rate of participation in government activities, hence the important part of democracy (government of the people) and its democratization substance resuscitated. It recommends that government, political elites and Civil Society Organisations should continue to emphasise social media as a verifiable platform to increase citizens' participation in governance and politics. The identifiable gap in the foregoing studies is that the two of them are based on secondary data while the third one was a survey, but based on only electoral process. It is therefore limited in scope because good governance includes transparency in conduct of elections. This gap is filled by this present study.

III. Research Methods

Survey research design was adopted for this study. Survey was considered suitable because the context of the study involves studying the people, their attitudes, beliefs, experiences, concerning a given phenomenon. The area of study is Anambra State, one of the five states in the South-East geopolitical zone of Nigeria. The state is bounded by Delta State to the West, Imo and Rivers States to the South, Enugu State to the East and Kogi State to

the North. The State's capital is Awka, while the state's largest city is Onitsha, which is regarded as one of the largest Metropolitan area in Africa. Nnewi is the second largest commercial and Industrial city in Anambra State, and also a known auto-mobile hub within Nigeria and Africa.

The population of interest for this study is 89,255 university students in Anambra state, who constitute the Netizens population. A sample size of 362 university students was drawn for the study, using the Taro Yameni's formula. Furthermore, the researchers used a multi-stage sampling strategy to select the samples for the study. The research instrument used for the study was the questionnaire, and copies were delivered to the respondents through some Head of departments and Course representatives in three universities (one from each of the three senatorial zones). Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University (COOU) represented Anambra North; Nnamdi Azikiwe University (NAU), Awka, represented Anambra Central, and Madonna University, Okija, represented Anambra South.

Results obtained from the study were presented in simple frequency distribution tables and analysed subsequently. Out of the 362 copies of the questionnaire administered, a total of 326 (90.06%) copies were retrieved from the respondents. Below are the results.

IV. Results and Discussion

4.1 Data Presentation and Analysis

Table 1. New media is the Trending Innovation in the contemporary communication world

Options	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly	179	52
Agreed	147	48
Strongly Disagreed	0	0
Disagreed	0	0
Total	326	100

Source: Field Survey, 2024

The implication of the data in the table above is that new media are trending innovations in the ICT's world.

Table 2. New media have a wide application in contemporary society.

Options	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agreed	128	39
Agreed	142	44
Strongly Disagreed	32	10
Disagreed	24	7
Total	326	100

Source: Field Survey, 2024

In Table 3 above, the data imply that a significant proportion of the respondents were conversant with the wide influence and applications of the new media in Nigerian society. This is an indication that the respondents may be able to know the extent to which new media may be used in governance.

Table 3. New Media are presently being utilized in governance and politics

Options	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agreed	152	47
Agreed	148	45
Strongly Disagreed	0	0
Disagreed	26	8
Total	326	100

Source: Field Survey, 2024

The implication of the data on the table above is that a significant proportion of the respondents was aware that new media are being used in governance. The data are also an indication that the respondents are compliant with the global digital technology.

Table 4. New media have the potential to nurture and streamline good governance

Options	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agreed	168	52
Agreed	158	48
Strongly Disagreed	0	0
Disagreed	0	0
Total	326	100

Source: Field Survey, 2024

The data in Table 4 above imply that the respondents perceive new media as effective technology innovation that can improve the efficiency of governance.

Table 5. New media can facilitate the responsibilities, accountability and transparency in governance

Options	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agreed	173	53
Agreed	140	43
Strongly Disagreed	0	0
Disagreed	13	4
Total	326	100

Source: Field Survey, 2024

The implication of the data on Table 5 above is that new media application has become a veritable strategy improve good governance.

Table 6. New media application in governance may result to checks and balances

Options	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agreed	168	52
Agreed	158	48
Strongly Disagreed	0	0
Disagreed	0	0
Total	326	100

Source: Field Survey, 2024

4.2 Discussion of Findings

Objective One which sought to establish whether respondents hear and view government, policies in the New Media; the finding clearly reveals that respondents are exposed to the use of New Media platforms for entertainment and information purposes, and due to media convergence, many devices particularly communication devices like smart phones, laptops, podcast have the capacity to stream live events and also retrieve information for audience consumption. To that extent therefore, respondents in Anambra State are privy to information concerning government policies and programmes on new media where they actively critique programmes and policies that are obnoxious and anti- people and where necessary, also commend government for instituting programmes which are beneficial. For instance, in Table 1, all the respondents are of the view that new media technology is the Trending Innovation in contemporary communication world. The implication therefore, is that respondents are more current and abreast with the ubiquitous nature of the new media and its effect on their lives which is seen in the globalization of media in our world. This further justifies why the theory of technological determinism is employed in this paper.

Concurrently, *Objective 2*, which sought to ascertain the proportion of respondents who are sufficiently educated and enlightened about government policies and programmes in the new media, is supported by the finding in Table 3, as 300 respondents are aware of the use of the New Media in governance. The fact that they are aware of the new media in governance confirms the position that there is high level of Netizens who, not only surf the Net for entertainment purpose but also use it as platforms to voice their opinion on matters as they pertain to governance in the country. It shows that Netizens are not docile when it comes to how governance business is being done.

Again, this is closely related to *Objective 3* which sought to establish whether netizens use the new media to make inputs in government policies, programmes and activities. Part of the elements of a democratic state is periodic elections where citizens participate in choosing their representatives in government and freedom of speech. These two are some of the elements that are at the heart of any democracy. Therefore, it behooves on citizens to constantly dialogue with authorities and government. This justifies the use of the theory of Dialogism in this research which is basically conceived as the communication of ideas and opinions on issues that are critical for good governance. It is the constant response of Netizens in Anambra State, through the New Media that will nurture and streamline good governance in the society. This is evident in the response of netizens in Table 4, where all the respondents were of the view that the new media have the potential to nurture and streamline good governance.

The constant participation of netizens in government through the new media evidently facilitates accountability, responsibility, responsiveness and transparency in governance while at the same time acting as checks and balances in governance. The new media create avenue for government to listen and understand the yearnings as well as reactions of citizens to its programme and policies. Public opinion is critical in governance. This is evidently and emphatically expressed by respondents in Tables 5 and 6 where 313 respondents and 326 respondents are of the view that the new media can facilitate responsibility, accountability, and transparency which ultimately leads to improve in governance

Results from this study revealed that respondents were unanimous in their affirmation that new media is ubiquitous in the society today. Again, the results revealed that respondents in Anambra State perceive new media as streamlining and nurturing the operations of

participatory democracy and therefore a veritable instrument for good governance. These views were in tandem with the dialogism theory and the technological determinism theory. This finding aligns with the technological determinism theory which formed the bedrock of the paper. To that extent, therefore, the finding further revealed that the medium is the message.

IV. Conclusion

The media stand as the Fourth Estate, a formidable force shaping the narrative of good governance. Its role as a watchdog, facilitator of informed discourse, and promoter of transparency and accountability is indispensable. As we navigate the complexities of the modern world, it is imperative that we recognise and champion the role of the media as the vanguard of good governance. By doing so, we contribute to the sustenance of democracy and the well-being of societies worldwide.

Recommendations

Giving the ubiquitous nature and invaluable contribution of the new media in promoting good governance in Nigeria through netizens' engagement in the polity, the study recommends as follows:

1. Governments at all levels (national and sub-national) should not stifle the freedom of speech and create more virtual space for netizens to continue to interface with the government. This reduces the level of suspicion, creates an environment of understanding and trust as well as wins the trust and confidence of the people.
2. Since the potentials of the new media can be harnessed as evident from the findings, government has the duty to connect rural areas where internet penetration is abysmally low or non-existent. This will help to connect netizens with those who govern them and further open up the space or channel of communication between the government and the people.

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