

## Social Media Regulations and Government Censorship in Nigeria

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### **Abstract:**

*Social media regulations and government censorship in Nigeria have evolved over the years, shaped by the government's desire to manage the influence of online platforms on public discourse, politics, and social activism. There have been discussions about regulating over-the-Top (OTT) services and, by extension, digital material all over the world. Through mandatory operational licenses or content filtering, regulators continue to try to bring OTT service providers' services inside their regulatory purview in a number of jurisdictions. It has been the same in Nigeria, one of the biggest markets for OTT services worldwide. Despite the fact that Nigerians are using social media more frequently and finding ways to communicate with one another that are less expensive than paying for phone calls, these calls for regulation continue to reverberate. The Nigerian government has expressed concern over the use of social media to commit crimes and support terrorist activities in the nation as a result of the exponential rise in social media usage among Nigerians and the country's escalating level of insecurity. The way that citizens criticize the government on numerous social media sites like Twitter and organize themselves for both online and offline rallies like the EndSARS Protest is even more concerning for the administration. The government's agenda to establish channels for social media and OTT regulations has been centered on these concerns. The paper argued that social media has an impact on society in many different nations throughout the world. Due to its role in amplifying and hastening regime changes in Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya, the Arab spring became a point of reference in numerous discourses.*

### **Keywords:**

*Censorship, Government, Nigeria, Regulations and Social Media*

## **I. Introduction**

There have been discussions about regulating Over-the-Top (OTT) services and, by extension, digital material all over the world. Through mandatory operational licenses or content filtering, regulators continue to try to bring OTT service providers' services inside their regulatory purview in a number of jurisdictions. It has been the same in Nigeria, one of the biggest markets for OTT services worldwide. Despite the fact that Nigerians are using social media more frequently and finding ways to communicate with one another that are less expensive than paying for phone calls, these calls for regulation continue to reverberate (Isegyu & Inobemhe, 2021). According to a Data Reportal 2021 report, 33 million people used social media in Nigeria as of January 2021. By enabling citizens to discuss issues, band together for a cause, and hold leaders responsible, social media is offering the people a platform to have a voice in government.

The Nigerian government has expressed concern over the use of social media to commit crimes and support terrorist activities in the nation as a result of the exponential rise in social

media usage among Nigerians and the country's escalating level of insecurity (Aondover et al., 2025). The way that citizens criticize the government on numerous social media sites like Twitter and organize themselves for both online and offline rallies like the EndSARS Protest is even more concerning for the administration. The government's agenda to establish channels for social media and OTT regulations has been centered on these concerns.

Thus, the Nigerian government announced the indefinite suspension of Twitter in early June 2021 after the social media platform deleted tweets from President Muhammadu Buhari of Nigeria, warning the Igbo majority in the country's south-eastern region of the possibility of a recurrence of the Biafran Civil War of 1967 (Maclean, 2021). Blackenship in Msughter (2023) claims that the message, which was about disciplining "those who transgress today" in "the language they will understand" and mentioned Nigerian secessionists, violated Twitter user guidelines that forbid posting material that threatens or encourages violence. However, it was ultimately based on "a litany of problems with the social media platform in Nigeria, where misinformation and fake news spread through it have had real world violent consequences," according to the Nigerian government. The government claimed that the removal of the President's tweets was a factor in their decision to ban Twitter usage. The National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) was also instructed by the Nigerian government to start the licensing procedure for all OTT services and social media operations in Nigeria right away. Many Nigerians may still access the site through virtual private networks (VPNs) and continue to express their opinions on other apps, such as the Indian-based microblogging service Koo, despite the ban.

The Ban has stoked the discussion over OTT regulation and rekindled the need to review Nigerian law's position on the regulation of OTT services and social media in general, aside from the constitutional question of whether the Ban constitutes an infringement of free expression. More importantly, the tweet's deletion is a part of a bigger discussion about the influence of social media on politics and the public discourse. According to Blackenship (2021), social media platforms like Twitter have had an impact on democracy and politics, social movements, international relations, businesses, and economies globally in recent years. More than a decade ago, the clamor for social media laws began to grow as a result of these changes.

Since 2012, press attacks and nation-state violations of basic rights of citizens have contributed to a deterioration in freedom of speech worldwide. Examples include the disclosure of criminal investigations involving journalists detained in Turkey in 2017 for "insulting the president," which resulted in around 6000 prosecutions and 20,000 detentions (Ere, 2020). Similarly, Myanmar's Kyaw Soe Oo and Wa Lone, two journalists, were detained for their investigative work (Ere, 2020). These novel official responses to online protest by citizens gave rise to digital authoritarianism. For instance, China's practice of scheduling training and seminars on facial recognition and artificial intelligence technology strengthens surveillance and Internet restrictions. This development suggests a growing risk to global democracy "as the Internet carries out the role of a virtual public sphere" (Singhai, 2019).

Notably, the freedom offered by the Internet enables communication apps and social media sites like Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram, and Tumblr to send messages and disseminate information (Kurfi et al., 2021). Internet technology creates an environment that is favorable for current transnational political engagement. The speed and space it offer make it easier for nongovernmental organizations to communicate internationally. With a minimum of money and red tape, it enables protesters to elevate local activities to a global scale. Connectivity allows for increased participation and awareness-raising. It also gives a voice to those who do not

have one while ensuring that those who participate are socially empowered to organize themselves and form alliances on a transnational level using the tool of the social media to bring about social change (Fenton, 2016).

Studies like Oloyede and Elega's (2020) investigation on the effects of social media hashtags like #EndSars on raising awareness of police rape, assault, and extrajudicial killings finally led to the dissolution of the Special Anti-Robbery Squad in Nigeria (SARS). The emergence of social media has also contributed significantly to a rise in political participation in Nigeria over time. Agbaenyi et al., in Vitalis et al., (2025) attributed the victory of the opposition party (APC) in the general elections of 2015 to the use of social media by political actors for communicating campaign promises and exposing some wrongdoings of the incumbent government and its party to the people as opposed to the mainstream media, which was largely under the control of the incumbent government. Despite these facts, the present administration of Nigeria has long expressed concern about Twitter usage there. When the #EndSARS protest received 48 million tweets in 10 days in 2020, it gained further traction on Twitter. Prior to banning Twitter, the present administration has proposed social media regulation on several occasions. Earlier attempts to enact an anti-social media measure had been significantly thwarted by the widespread uproar on Twitter (Omilana, 2021; Usman et al., 2022). Days before to the ban, the nation's information minister referred to Twitter's actions in Nigeria as worrisome, citing the platform's impact on the End SARS protests.

The second stage of the Internet's evolution, known as "Web 2.0," emerged in the late 1990s and early 2000s. Feedback, interactivity, and multimodality characterize this phase of the Internet's development. According to Yar (2018), what set Web 2.0 platforms, applications, and services apart from their forebears was the blurring (and possibly effacement) of the line separating content creators from content consumers, with users producing their own multimedia content (e.g., text, images, animations, audio-visual recordings). This might be shared with numerous other users, and it is user interaction that gives social media its "social" flavor. Notable among the social networking sites in vogue today that exhibits the above-described features of the Web 2.0 and more includes: Facebook, YouTube, and WhatsApp Twitter, Intstagram, Snapchat, Flickr, Tumblr, Skype, LinkedIn, Telegram, Reddit, MySpace, Viber, and many others.

Social media has an impact on society in many different nations throughout the world. Due to its role in amplifying and hastening regime changes in Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya, the Arab spring became a point of reference in numerous discourses (Saint et al., 2024). Al-Jenaibi (2014) discovered that social media platforms complimented traditional media and acted as a catalyst for the revolutions that swept through numerous Arab states in the Middle East. The study involved respondents from the Arab area. In Hungary in 2006, social media was used to incite rioting, street protests, and violence. Radical political and cultural groups used the Internet during this time to exchange information, rally support, and create their own versions of events (Moropofoluwa et al., 2024). In a bid to assess the relationship between social media use and political knowledge among the Turkish electorate, Andi et al., (2019) found that social media use is positively associated with higher levels of political knowledge and participation. The challenge, however, was that users are more likely to be misinformed and more likely to be opinionated about politics than nonusers (Andi et al., 2019).

Despite the benefits of social media, there have been several calls for its regulation from both individuals and governments globally. The UK government passed the 2013 Defamation Acts in response to people's defamatory actions on social media (Maradun et al., 2021). Cyberbullying, election tampering, FOMO, social media addiction, and the dissemination of fake

news are just a few examples of social media's "evil side," hence it is necessary to establish an impartial, trustworthy, and global regulatory framework that applies to all social media businesses equally. Researchers like O'Keeffe and ClarkePearson in Kurfi et al., (2023) also call for intervention, stating in their 2011 report that pre-teens and teens who spend a lot of time on social media sites, such as Facebook, start to exhibit classic symptoms of depression brought on by the intensity of the online world, putting them at risk of social isolation, which in turn leads them to risky social media sites for "help" that may promote substance abuse, unsafe sexual practices, and other negative behaviors.

Nigerians' cynicism about social media regulation mirrors a widespread viewpoint that has been amply documented in the literature. According to Balkin (2020), people have differing views on how social media sites should be regulated. While previous studies by Wagner et al., (2017) have been helpful in balancing the advantages and disadvantages of social media regulation, a sizable portion of their findings are mostly restricted to western social media contexts. Even the well-known go-to website for worldwide media attitudes research, Pewresearch.org, mostly targets the American audience. The emergence of the debate in Nigeria contributes to the burgeoning literature about attitudes to social media regulation. It is based on the foregoing that it became expedient to evaluate users' perception and responses towards President Buhari's #TwitterBan in Nigeria and its implication to freedom of expression and online engagement and activism which is the focus of the study.

## II. Review of Literature

### Theoretical Underpinning

This paper employed Adaptive Structuration Theory (AST). Adaptive Structuration Theory (AST), developed by Marshall Scott Poole and Gerardine DeSanctis, focuses on the importance of dominant social interactions between politicians and other social media users (1994). The idea that cutting-edge information technologies, including social media platforms, promote reciprocal involvement and interchange in the activities of an organization through a sophisticated management of information forms the basis of the theory (Aondover et al., 2025). It suggests that various systems adapt to information technologies as a structure in order to foster human interaction and communication.

According to the theory, there is a two-way exchange between the social order and technology, also known as the system and structure, which leads to a societal response or "movement" (Turner, 1986). Systems are the means by which this knowledge is communicated, and structures are both the cause and the effect of social action. Technology and how it is used are both discussed in this exchange. In this instance, the users establish the agenda for the kind of material they seek out and the questions they respond to. The AST depicts how changes in organizational structure result from the development of high-tech devices. As a result, the AST application's value comes in how it assesses the adoption and use of new media technologies in society.

According to Deborah, Bob, and Renee's explanation in 2003, the focus of AST is on social structures, laws, and resources provided by institutions and technologies as the foundation for human action. According to the notion, technological and operational structures are inextricably linked and have a continuing influence over one another. Group Decision Support Systems (GDSS) were used by Desanctis and Poole (1994) as the foundation for their AST study. Social structures made possible by cutting-edge information technology contain two parts. The system's open aptitudes and directives take the form of certain structural categories. Spirit is the

overarching commitment to the norms and goals that are necessary for a specific set of structural kinds. Users can better understand and interpret the value of technology with the aid of Spirit. Resolution process, governance, competence, conflict management, and atmosphere are a few examples of metrics that show the spirit of a social structure.

Desanctis and Poole (1994) explain seven suggestions regarding AST:

1. The first proposition explains how advanced information technologies (AITs) produce social structures that may be classified according to their types and spirits, and that as a result of their differences, the technology stimulates a variety of social interactions. Features and spirit may be derived through manuals, discussions with designers, interpretations, and user feedback, among other sources.
2. The second premise argues that depending on the assignment, the environment, and other circumstances that offer alternative sources of social structures, the adoption of AIT structures may vary. Examples include explaining assignments in terms of convolution, lushness, or conflict probability, and explaining the organizational environment in terms of complexity, validation, or democratic atmosphere.
3. The third proposition asserts that as technology, task, and conservational structures are used during social interaction, new sources of structure will emerge.
4. The fourth proposition clarifies the new social structures that emerge during group interface as the rules and attributes of an AIT are viewed from a certain angle, and then are duplicated during group communication as it develops.
5. The fifth proposition emphasizes that depending on how AIT is used, a group's decision-making process will vary.
6. According to premise number six, how AIT is applied will vary based on the internal structure of the group.
7. In accordance with AIT and other sources of social structure, the ideal process of appropriation and choice appropriate to the undertaking that is being carried out and results in the anticipated outcomes of AIT is stated in proposition number seven.

Deborah et al., in Vitalis et al., (2024) claim that AST can be classified into three analytical categories: micro, institutional, and global. This classification focuses on how technology has influenced human connection and communication. The Microlevel's appropriation analysis comprises identifying various appropriation modifications, distinguishing between true and false appropriation, and examining the contributory usages and methods group members use with regard to technological structures. An examination of appropriation through a meeting's or a series of sessions' overall flow is known as global category analysis. At the institutional level, appropriation analysis entails a process of dialogue about technology that is reflective across time with the goal of identifying resilient business models, user groups, or organizations.

There are numerous benefits to AST. In the beginning, AST improves the analysis of between-group variations. The usage of technology is emphasized as a fundamental component of technology effects, and it also describes the operational potential of technology. Thirdly, the theory provides a method that can be applied universally to the study of how groups come into being. This method shows how changes in groups and organizations have a significant impact on how these changes turn out. Additionally, AST has several drawbacks. First of all, it assumes a perplexing degree of complexity and is challenging to comprehend. Second, AST is not based on guiding assumptions.

The idea is specifically pertinent to this study since it examined the interaction between three distinct features: social structures, human interactions, and advanced information technologies (AITs). These claims can be given a little unique meaning by directly applying them to social groups in regard to social media sites like twitter. First off, social media platforms serve as conduits for the transfer of information between social groups. Second, this informative flow is not partial but rather mixes structure and system. Finally, as this social networking tool becomes more widespread and "interpenetration of structure" increases, it has the potential to have an impact on all aspects of society and to bring about change.

This theory is considered apt for the study because of the fact that Twitter fits into the central assumption of the AST which suggests that advanced information technologies, like social media platforms, allow cooperative involvement and interchange in the activities of an organization through a refined information management system. The TwitterBan stands against everything this theory proposes.

### III. Result and Discussion

#### 3.1 Twitter as a Social Media Platform

Since its formal launch in July 2006, Twitter has emerged as a real-time social media network that enables users to search and share information about events happening around the world. It was first established in March 2006. An instantaneous information network that connects users to the most recent news, information, opinions, and stories is how Twitter characterizes its service (Twitter, 2012). More than 200 million individuals began using Twitter in January 2011, and as of October 2011, more than 350 million tweets were sent per day (Ahmed & Msughter, 2022). Now a powerful tool for interpersonal, professional, and academic communication, Twitter's microblogging and messaging capabilities. Twitter messages permit a length of 140 characters in the maximum, and a typically 11 words in each message.

By adding the sign "@" followed by the account name of another user, i.e. @Friend Username, tweets addressed to that user can be concealed or made public. Twitter users can "re-tweet" (RT) messages from other users to share them with their followers, which copies and broadcasts the original message (Zhao and Rosson, 2009). Messages can be designated with a topic by using hashtags, such as #Topic; clicking or searching on a hashtag displays the choice of the most recent tweets or all tweets that share the hashtag on Twitter. However, the nature of Twitter hashtags continues to be fragmented and redundant (Chang, 2010).

Users of Twitter can communicate with one another through two basic public techniques known as retweets and mentions in addition to broadcasting their tweets to an audience of followers. Retweets serve as a form of validation that enables users to retweet content that was first posted by another user, elevating the exposure of the content (Airaoje et al., 2023). Additionally, mentions, the second important open method by which Twitter users network, operates in opposition by enabling users to respond to or converse with one another directly through their public feed, or to a lesser extent, by referencing a specific user in the third person. Conover, Ratkiewicz et al., (2011) explain that these two ways of communication on Twitter performs distinctive and corresponding objectives, but acts together also as the major apparatuses for categorical, public user to user communication on Twitter.

Additionally, hashtags are considered to be a key aspect of the Twitter platform. This is due to the fact that they enable users to annotate tweets with metadata that specifies the message's intended audience or subject. The use of hashtags to distinguish groups of content and

the decision to tag particular people as participants in particular informational channels. The organization of information on Twitter depends on hashtags. Tweets can be distributed to a wider audience than just one's followers by using hashtags. Indeed, as hashtags are open to all users, one does not need to be a Twitter user to follow the debate. You can look up hashtags on Google, Twitter, and trending websites.

Several academics have discovered that Twitter is evolving into a crucial tool for communication that improves the description of electoral processes and collective online political protest. A straightforward Tweet can reach a sizable audience, allowing citizens to participate in politics from a variety of cultural perspectives. The Twitter network already has more than 200 million users, enabling public involvement and communications via short text messages that are instantly shared (Gayo-Avello in Aliyu et al., 2023).

Regarding the characteristics of Internet-based communication, there are two primary arguments. First of all, Internet-based communication makes it possible for echo chambers to grow. Second, the Internet provides a forum for exposure to opposing viewpoints and ideologies. According to the first theory, the Internet has led to more people participating in individual forums that share their views and ignoring subjects that don't affect them. The Internet is believed to increase discernment, but it also shields users from opposing viewpoints, increasing the likelihood of echo chambers. People in this position are frequently opinionated, absorb knowledge that supports their beliefs, and reduce their exposure to unfavorable information. Gurevitch et al., (2009, p. 177) describe members and new-media users as “self-seeking consumers, free-floating individuals, or sensation-seeking pleasure seeker rather than active and responsible members of political communities”.

Gurevitch et al., (2009) argue that despite the abundance of information options available to Internet users, there is little in the way of in-depth, thought-provoking, and useful political news and analysis. Instead, political messaging on the Internet tend to focus more on personality, gossip, and spasm, with politics being portrayed as having a negative tendency. The examination of Polish Internet political discussion forums by Sobkowicz and Sobkowicz (2012) revealed that the platform is characterized by major divergence and political disputes that result in negligible change of position. They claim that provocations and other highly inflammatory communication have made the political rift worse. This helps to reinforce the in-group status and stimulate defensive mechanisms between different political divisions. Others suggest an alternate proposition in which Internet-based political debate has the prospective to deliver a democracy-enriching communication platform.

This line of argumentation contends that participation in online communities and activities has the potential to develop a variety of networks and relationships. Additionally, a number of studies have demonstrated how the Internet can improve public discourse and perhaps create normative environments for the formation of opinions (Aondover, 2024). The personalization of media on the Internet, according to Rasmussen (2013, p. 98), enables people to "directly voice their opinion in social networks sites, participate in campaigns and social movements, and exchange sentiments on social media in their own ways and language, drawing upon personal experiences, knowledge, engagements, values, and judgments," despite the Internet being typically associated with the idea of "individualization" of content usage.

Research demonstrates that compared to other social networks, Twitter can promote a more diversified public dialogue. Twitter is seen to have the power to combine two separate audiences into one connected group by fusing audiences that use the internet for enjoyment with

audiences who use the internet to access more political discourses (Aondover & Akin-Odukoya, 2024). According to 2011 research by Anstead & O'Loughlin of real-time audience response on a BBC program called Question Time, people utilize social media to share information, learn new things, and participate in discussions. The findings claim that Twitter's propensity for multiparty communication is due to the fact that its "viewertariat" users establish a multifaceted community of commentators with a range of stimuli, implications, and individuality who aim to inspire, educate, connect, have fun, and provoke. They contend that real-time internet conversation is not uniformly common, harsh, or ignorant, but instead includes a variety of interactivity that might broaden democratic thought.

### 3.2 The Politics of Twitter

Twitter is playing a bigger and bigger role in global politics. States use Twitter and deal with it as part of efforts to resolve or purposefully worsen political problems (Aondover et al., 2024). It is becoming more and more obvious from tweet storms, meme wars, and diplomatic trolling that Twitter no longer only serves as a tool for interpersonal communication, as it was originally intended. Instead, it has evolved into a significant platform for states to articulate and develop policy responses. Twitter has been linked to both significant moments of social transformation and contentious incidents that have led to ambassadors being expelled from a country. This social media platform also had a significant role in the targeted meddling of a state in the domestic political affairs of another.

Since its debut, Twitter has evolved from its original purpose as a new social media sharing platform for communication between friends to the preferred channel for diplomats and political leaders to interact with their counterparts and larger domestic and international publics. Twitter has continued to be the primary technology instrument in diplomacy despite the growth of other social media platforms like Facebook and Instagram, both of which are used by governments for political communication. Twitter is an online microblogging service that was founded in 2006 by Jack Dorsey, Evan Williams, and Biz Stone. Users can "tweet," or post, brief messages about "what's happening." Twitter was developed initially as a way of keeping in touch with friends, using the structure of instant messaging to locate others and be updated as to their whereabouts and activities. Users can follow other Twitter users—via the @name handle—and use its private message or @mention functions to communicate with each other.

The hashtag (#) function of the Twitter platform is another feature. It's a short identifier that serves as a sorting mechanism for the day's most popular tweets by designating a tweet as adding to an ongoing online discussion (Bruns and Burgess in Aondover et al., 2022). Users have the option to simply retweet posts, replicating the message, or they can quote the tweet and add a statement of their own in a more interactive version of the retweet. This feature is known as the "retweet" function. Additionally, users can incorporate hyperlinks, images, memes, and brief videos into their tweets.

According to Duncombe in Aondover and Aondover (2023) Twitter has steadily become the go-to social media channel for digital diplomacy. In January 2009, when Twitter users live-tweeted a commercial plane's emergency landing on the Hudson River in New York, the first sign that Twitter might grow beyond a social media platform that only broadcasted personal comments appeared. When the US government asked Twitter's developers to postpone a planned software update in order to facilitate communication surrounding the Iranian Green Movement protests, Twitter became a significant political tool in that same year. Twitter was once again used as a crucial tool for Middle Eastern protest movements during the "Arab Spring" in 2011. While the "Twitter revolutions" narrative of the Green Movement protests and

“Arab Spring” uprisings overlaid the role of Twitter in these movements, the use of this platform as an organizational tool to mobilize civil society within the Middle East and beyond is nonetheless clear.

States have since realized how crucial Twitter is to expanding the reach of their digital diplomacy campaigns. Former British ambassador to Lebanon Tom Fletcher has claimed that Twitter is crucial for the fundamental responsibilities of a diplomat, including "intelligence gathering, analysis, influence, promotion of English as the language of cyberspace, crisis management, and commercial work" (Fletcher 2012, 43). Nevertheless, it is Twitter's design that draws diplomats and political leaders to the social media site. Users can engage directly with one another by posting brief messages, however because the platform is publicly open, anybody who visits the site can observe tweets in addition to followers. The restricted size of tweets—initially 140 characters, this was increased in December 2017 to 280 characters—allows for scanning and tracking of conversations at a glance. While political leaders and diplomats can communicate directly with one another, this goes beyond personal interaction, as tweets are broadcast to a much wider audience (Aondover et al., 2022; Aondover et al., 2025).

### 3.3 Twitter and Political Engagement

Politicians have included Twitter as a crucial instrument for communication planning and intensively implementing the plans during election campaigns (Soedarsono et al., 2020). It is widely acknowledged that during a political campaign, a candidate's image or personality has ranked higher than a position's requirements or other factors in how the public views politicians (Lee, 2013). A more interactive agenda setting for the candidate and the followers results from Twitter's collaborative nature, story-changing, and story-evolving environment. According to Gokce et al., in Hile et al., (2023) Twitter is good for a well-formed story with verified sources on short notice, which is quite difficult for traditional media platforms like newspapers and TV channels. According to Gasser and Gerlach in Hile et al., (2023) journalists, lobbyists, and politicians all closely follow tweets and retweets because they have become recognizable elements of political discourse in many nations. The perception of Twitter's strategic role in a political candidate's communication, however, requires more study.

According to Soedarsono et al., (2020), Twitter has gained popularity as a means for disseminating information and is utilized extensively by people, businesses, and politicians. But in the case of politicians, controlling and maintaining social networks well can be utilized as a political communication strategy to win support from the populace. Makice in Idris and Msughter (2022) came to the conclusion that Twitter serves five key purposes. 1) Daily Chatter Discussing regarding daily activities and routines; 2) Chat with the "@" for twitter others account, specific talk to others, on a user basis; 3) Share information or messages with other users; 4) Report the news; 5) Report the developments of certain issues to other users. While, Solis (2011) suggests 4C with a community approach, namely:

- a. Content refers to the information in a communication that is most likely to pique the public's interest in starting a community.
- b. Context refers to the ability to communicate effectively by being aware of the audience's qualities.
- c. Connectivity is the creation of interactions-supporting experiences.
- d. Continuity is the provision of ongoing, beneficial, and reliable interaction with the audience.

Soedarsono et al., (2020) aver that leader's twitter content can be divided to four major elements i.e. News Sharing; Context of Message, Quality of Communication, and daily Activities Updates as discussed in the following sections:

### 3.4 Twitter and Political Revolution in Nigeria

Modern times have seen an increase in political discourse in Nigeria on social media, particularly on Twitter and Facebook. Dr. Reuben Abati described those who criticize the government on social media as "collective children of wrath, confused mob of Facebook fanatics who appear to be in rivalry among themselves to bring down the President" in an article that was published in the Guardian newspaper in August 2012 (Maikaba & Msughter, 2019). This demonstrates that the Federal Government of Nigeria pays attention to the opinions of its very active social media audience. A majority of traditional media entities, including radio, television, and newspapers, have official Facebook pages and/or Twitter accounts with sizable followings. These mainstream media outlets regularly post news on social media about political parties and their activities in Nigeria, but it wasn't always clear how political parties were using these platforms to get in touch with their supporters.

According to estimates based on Internet World Stats' data of internet usage, there are approximately 48.36 million internet users in Nigeria, making up 28.9% of all internet users in Africa and a population saturation ratio of 28.4%. (Internet World Stats, 2012). Due to this, Nigeria became the nation in Africa with the largest percentage of internet users. This was a significant increase from the less than 100k Internet users in Nigeria that were noted in 1999, just before the changeover from military to civil administration (Mojaye & Aondover, 2022). The International Telecommunications Union also predicts that by 2015, there will be roughly 70 million users. The use of social media in Nigerian politics in the lead-up to the 2011 presidential election has been acknowledged. President Goodluck Jonathan made a statement on social media on September 15, 2010, expressing his interest in running for president in 2011. This action is noteworthy. Strategically, this announcement was made on the same day that former President Ibrahim Babangida announced he would run in the same election, causing a social media frenzy.

One of the cutting-edge technologies that political parties employ in their outreach to the public is social media. There aren't many numbers available for researchers and others to work with about the number of political parties in Nigeria that are registered on these social media sites and how those parties use the social media applications, given the proliferation of social media platforms. It cannot be overstated how important social media is to today's society and to political communication (Msughter & Idris, 2023).

Internet-based communication has also started to become more significant, particularly in Nigeria and throughout Africa. The internet and mobile devices open up exciting new possibilities for one-to-one and one-to-many communication. A growing number of people who might not have access to a computer or a secure connection are now able to participate in "the global conversation" thanks to the widely reported rapid diffusion of mobile connectivity and services and various forms of public and shared internet accessibility like social media. As a result, since the turn of the century, social media use in politics has continued to increase in several countries across Africa, including Nigeria. For instance, the 2011 general elections in Nigeria saw a significant advancement in the use of social media for political communication. Politicians in Nigeria are slowly but surely moving their campaigns to social media platforms and other online venues, maybe as a result of President Barack Obama's successful use of Facebook to win the American presidential election as the first black president.

According to Omenugha et al., in Msughter et al., (2023) political candidates used all available resources to arm their supporters during the election period after realizing that campaigning entailed more than just handshakes and physical contact. Furthermore, social media

sites like Twitter, YouTube, Facebook, and blogs were widely used in Nigeria during the 2015 general election. Social media has evolved into one of the most crucial instruments for political campaign organizers to carry out election campaigns and other electioneering activities, political mobilization and engagement, etc. because of its participatory, interactive, and cost-effective character. As a result, social media in Nigeria has solidified its position as a platform for building political support.

Prior to now, Nigerian elections were conducted mostly through the use of mainstream media, despite the obvious drawback of delivering biased, uninformative news stories to a dispersed audience. However, the most recent decision to combine "old" and "new" media for political communication has increased motivation between the electorate and candidates because of the open atmosphere the new media provides. The value of social media is apparent to those in political office, whose work and professional existence are dependent on the fundamentals and observations of their voters, just as it has opened a dialogue between trades and consumers.

In light of this, Oreoluwa et al., (2024) assert that social media offers opportunities for elected officials and candidates to build relationships with voters, foster transparency, and even combat their rivals in methods similar to those used in traditional media for so long. As a result, social media's effectiveness in a political context appears to be most promising because it can serve as a catalyst for increased participation and democracy. According to Creighton in Owens-Ibie and Aondover (2024) the process by which public interests, wants, and ideals are incorporated into governmental and corporate decision-making is known as public participation. E-participation places emphasis on both this procedure and the use of the Internet as an additional or unique tool for fostering dialogue between candidates and voters.

Additionally, Karpf (2009) puts forth the concept of "politics 2.0," which is defined as utilizing the Internet's lowered transaction costs and information richness in order to improve inclusive and collaborative political institutions. As a result, several political candidates in Nigeria used social media to interact with and communicate with electorates as well as to disseminate important information to them. Social media was used as a platform for political discussion, especially among the younger generation.

### **3.5 Social Media Censorship and Freedom of Expression in Nigeria**

Internet censorship, according to Vareba et al., (2017), is the regulation or suppression of online content. These online contents cover everything that may be read, watched, and published online, from basic email to internet blogs. Therefore, internet filtering limits the material that can be shared or viewed on online platforms (Msughter et al., 2023). It could entail filtering or censoring content with copyrights that has been determined to be sensitive, pornographic, or detrimental to a certain group of people. In addition to blocking and filtering, methods of Internet censorship may also include content deletion and (partial or complete) Internet shutdown, such as President Buhari's #TwitterBan.

Vareba, et al. (2017) assert further that the government primarily employs some of its licensed entities to censor the Internet. It may also be carried out by a few particular private entities, either at the government's request or on their own initiative. The paradigm differs depending on the nation. While the majority of western democracies, most notably the United States and the United Kingdom, have moderate Internet censorship measures in place, undemocratic or only partially democratic nations, most notably China and the majority of Black African nations, go as far as to restrict online access to essential information, such as news; stifle citizen debate; and even shut down the Internet. Vareba, et.al (2017) conclude that The Internet

censorship paradigm emerged out of a specific range of imperatives, otherwise called pressures. They summed up the pressures or imperatives as follows:

- a. The need to ensure national security
- b. The protection of minors against abusive online contents
- c. The need to protect human dignity through checking incidences of hate speeches, racial discriminatory messages on online platforms
- d. The protection of privacy
- e. The need to ensure information security (through the prevention of malicious harking)
- f. The protection of reputation (to combat issues such as libel, comparative and unlawful advertising) (European Union 1996).
- g. Protection of the intellectual property

Nigeria has employed a number of measures, like other nations, to restrict the internet on its soil. While some of these instruments have been referred to as being natural, others have been more extralegal and intrusive in character. The laws passed by the nation to penalize cybercrimes and the many draconian and antidemocratic laws implemented circumstantially by the government to cope with cases of (perceived) misuse of the Internet by political opponents show the country's efforts toward Internet control (Vitalis et al., 2024).

The Electronic Crimes, Telecommunications and Postal Offences Decree, a draft piece of legislation, was one of the earliest attempts by Nigeria to penalize cybercrimes. This act defined cybercrimes and provided consequences to be applied to those who committed them on Nigerian soil. The Computer Security and Infrastructure Bill of 2005, the Electronic Provisions Bill of 2008, the Cyber Security Bill of 2011, the Electronic Transfer of Funds Crime Bill of 2011, the Criminal Code Amendment for Offenses Relating to Computer Misuse and Cybercrimes of 2011, and other early cybercrime bills were also adopted by the Nigerian Federation (Vitalis et al., 2025). Though these bills represented laudable governmental efforts towards regulating telecommunications and the use of internet-driven communications in Nigeria, most of them were quickly dropped due to lack of political will and government's inaptitude to "stay committed to the socio-legal growth" of the Nigerian citizenry.

#### **IV. Conclusion**

On social media, users are permitted to broadcast their social networks to other users. In this way, users can evaluate and form impressions about a source's perceived communication qualities by looking at the source's social network, such as its attractiveness, skill, and credibility. Because users of social media produce their own content, evaluating the message's quality and its sources also becomes more crucial for audiences. Such evaluation and perception are based on a variety of social media network-related factors. It was established that one of the cutting-edge technologies that political parties employ in their outreach to the public is social media. There aren't many numbers available for researchers and others to work with about the number of political parties in Nigeria that are registered on these social media sites and how those parties use the social media applications, given the proliferation of social media platforms. It cannot be overstated how important social media is to today's society and to political communication. The paper concludes that social media has an impact on society in many different nations throughout the world. Due to its role in amplifying and hastening regime changes in Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya, the Arab spring became a point of reference in numerous discourses.

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