New Media and Conflict Management in a Pluralistic Nigeria: A Perspective on the Opportunities and Threats of the Platforms

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Abstract

This study interrogates the place of new media in conflict management in Nigeria, taking into consideration the positive and negative implications of their numerous platforms such as online news sites, social networking sites and blogs among others. This assessment is done against the backdrop of the myriad ethno-religious conflicts that have engulfed the nation. Data were collected from secondary sources such as books, journals, seminar papers, websites and newspapers among others. The data were contextually analysed. Findings reveal that new media have potentials which, if effectively harnessed, can make them to serve as good conduits for conflict management in Nigeria, such as interactivity, interconnectivity, 'delocatedness', ubiquity and accessibility among others. On the other hand, it is discovered that the excessive freedom that characterizes the new media makes them prone to abuse, as it enables users to engage in deliberate spread of fake news, false and misleading stories, exaggerated truths and inflamed stories, publishing of gruesome pictures, biased and unbalanced reportage among other unprofessional and unwholesome practices. The study decries these unwholesome practices, and advocates for self-regulation by the masses in the course of their social media engagements for conflict reporting. It also calls for implementation of peace journalism principles by the masses who have become active reporters of conflict. This way, the negative effects of new media will be minimized and their positive impacts maximized for effective conflict management in the country.

Key words: New Media, Pluralism, Conflict management, Opportunities, Threats and Nigeria.

Introduction

The story of humanity in recent times is replete with conflicts, wars, acts of terrorism and ethnic tensions. At the moment, country in the world can boast of absolute peace, as recent happenings globally have proven. This reality becomes more glaring if one takes a look at the incessant confrontations between Palestine and Israel, the overheated atmosphere in the Middle East region spanning across Yemen, Iran and Iraq among several other countries. Similarly, the political turmoil in African countries such as Libya, Sudan, Congo, Liberia and Somalia among others has portrayed the endemic nature of conflict in recent times.

Nigeria, the giant of Africa is not spared with ravaging ethno-religious conflicts of farmers and herders, the lingering Boko Haram insurgency that unleashes genocidal attacks on residents, and

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the incessant tensions in the oil rich Niger Delta region among many other ethnicity and diversity-induced conflicts. Racism, nationalism and religious bigotry are raging in Europe, North America and Latin America. Some of these conflicts are latent while others are overt, and have claimed thousands of lives. Contemporary humanity, therefore, is predisposed to conflicts from every dimension (Suntai and Ishaku, 2017).

Conflict is said to be inevitable in every society (Adedogun 2006), but all segments of society are expected to find ways of resolving them. The mass media are expected to contribute immensely to the resolution of conflicts in society because of the central place they occupy in disseminating information to the people. Through this, they have power to aggravate or minimize issues depending on the way they approach and report them (Sandra, 2008). Mass media play a vital role in conflict prevention, resolution and transformation. They are, thus, essential not only for systems' growth but also for peace building and stability. Documented evidence suggests that media are not just mere conduits for information dissemination, but they also frame and interpret events, which in turn shape individual and collective perceptions of conflicts. This presumption, therefore, confers on the media the ability to either escalate or deescalate conflict situations (Umar in Gani and Mu'azu, 2009).

As the role of the media in managing ethno-religious conflicts is widely researched to unravel where the weight of evidence tilts (weather on the positive or negative side), there is, yet, another pressing challenge of ascertaining the position of the new media in the debates surrounding the media and conflict. This has become more significant a task, given the degree of popularity of new media platforms in the country, and the rate at which they are incorporated in the discourse of conflicts in the country (Dauda, Abubakar and Lawan, 2017). It is against this background that this study appraises the role that new media play in managing ethno-religious and other diversity-induced conflicts in Nigeria.

New Media and Conflict Management: A Conceptual Discussion

The scope of new media is broad, and encapsulates platforms such as online newspapers, social media, blogs, video games and online news outlets, all of which are domiciled on the internet (Suntai and Targema, 2017). Although the term new media has been in existence as early as the 1930s during the early days of television, and has continued to be in use all the while describing the trending communication technology of each era, new media as used in this study, refer to communication technologies that are housed on the internet, and are facilitated by information and communication technologies such as computers and mobile cell phones among a myriad other technologies that enable the audience to access and impact information to the masses (Nwabueze, 2014, Nwabueze, 2009).

New media, as used in this study, refer to those digital media that are interactive, incorporate two way communication and involve some form of computing. They are very easily processed, stored, transformed, retrieved, and hyperlinked. They are, perhaps, the most radical of all media,

and are easily searched for and accessed. New media are native to, and rely on computers for distribution: websites, human computer interface, virtual worlds, virtual reality, multimedia, computer games, computer animation, digital video, special effects in cinema and interactive computer installation. Communication via the new media platforms is understood as a cultural process that involves not only the actual transmission of information, but also the ritualized collection of senders and recipients. They are collections of online communication channels dedicated to community based input, interaction, content sharing and collaboration. Interaction on the new media platforms is becoming an integral part of life as social websites and applications proliferate. Accordingly, these new media platforms have given rise to social networking, with popular platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Messenger, WatsApp, YouTube and Instagram among an endless array of others.

Most new media platforms include components such as comment fields for users. In business, social media are used to market products, promote brands, and connect to current and potential customers. New media are often characterized as highly interactive digital technologies. They are changing the way people across the world are entertained and consume information. According to McQuail (2010), the main changes linked to the rise of new media are digitization and convergence of all aspects of median, increased interactivity and network connectivity, mobility and de-location of sending and receiving messages, adaptation of publication and audience roles, appearance of diverse new forms of media 'gateway', as well as fragmentation and blurring of the 'media institution'. Nwabueze (2009) shares similar sentiments when he notes that the new media are primarily online, interactive, interconnected, multipurpose/multimedia, easy to own and operate, flexible, have capacity to carry a lot of information, and have both interpersonal and mass communication orientations.

Conflict is, perhaps, one of the issues that have been widely studied in the academia. This attention is not farfetched from the fact that it is ubiquitous, and permeates every aspect of social existence (Toit, 2012). A plethora of definitions have emerged over the years, put forward by scholars to conceptualize conflict. Wilson (2007) sees it as a relationship between two or more opposing parties, whether marked by violence or not, based on actual or perceived difference in needs, interests, and goals. Conflict involves strong disagreement between or among parties in any transaction. Oyeshola (2005) proposes that there is conflict:

> When there is a sharp disagreement or clash, for instance, between divergent ideas, interests or peoples and nations. Conflict is universal yet distinct in every culture. It is common to all persons yet experienced uniquely by every individual. It is a visible sign of human energy and often the result of competitive striving for the same goal, rights and resources (p.101).

From the above, conflict is considered to be a product of disagreement that is rooted in the belief system and perception of threat to people's goal attainment. However, there are also positive sides to conflict. Robbins, (as cited in Uchem, 2003) stating the human relations view, posits that

conflict is a natural and inevitable outcome in any group and that it need not be evil, but rather has the potential to be a positive force in determining group performance. In line with this, Folarin (1998) asserts that development is hardly conceivable without some form or measure of conflict. Conflict acts as a catalyst for development. It brings change to the status quo.

According to Orhewere (2004) the conflict theory explains that conflicts are likely to be more intense and more evident to the extent that the contenders are collectively oriented rather than self-oriented, and hence, consider that their struggle is waged for the sake of the super individual. In this situation, individuals see themselves acting as representative of a cause, and fighting not for self but for the ideals they collectively represent. This way, they tend to be more radical and merciless as evident in the Niger- Delta, the Boko Haram insurgency, and indeed, several other conflicts across the country. Needless to stress at this point that conflict is inevitable in any given society, although the manifestation may differ due to the motivating factors and nature of contenders.

Conflict can also be functional or dysfunctional. Functional conflict improves the quality of decisions, stimulates creativity and innovations such that problems are tackled and tensions releaved to foster an environment that can be self-evaluated for positive change. Dysfunctional conflict, on the other hand, leads to retarded communication, reduced group cohesiveness and a subordination of goals to the primacy of in-fighting among members. Accordingly, Folarin (1998) and Owens- Obie (2000) advance some causes of conflict as follows:

1. Competition over goals and interests that cannot be shared: conflict arises when people compete for individual interests or goals;
2. Inconsistencies in goals: when two or more persons or parties are involved in an activity and they do not agree on the same goals, conflict arises;
3. Communication system break down: breakdown in system of communication can lead to misunderstanding and conflict. This occurs due to inefficient dissemination of information, distortions or alteration of details, inappropriate channels of communication etc.;
4. Inaccurate perceptions and attributions: conflict can arise as a result of inaccurate perception of a situation by the parties involved;
5. Increasing desire for autonomy and authority: the desire to dominate other parties often times results in conflict, most especially in pluralistic societies.

Expectedly, the negative consequences of conflict (especially violent conflict) are multifarious. In the words of Aminu and Pate (2013), after each round of a violent clash in any country, it becomes poorer, its image gets messier; hatred and ill feelings increase among the people, and feeling of animosity envelops the land. Long standing relationships are destroyed and the entire process of development is arrested. The country and its people become the collective victims as millions are displaced in their own settlements. Other consequences of conflict as mentioned by

the duo include loss of lives, property and sources of livelihood, loss of husbands, family heads and other valuable relations, loss of able bodied youth, break down of relationships and trust, psychological trauma, hatred and displacement of sources of information among other severe consequences.

In their final submission, the duo note that conflict is the prescription for poverty, since hardly any economic activity, especially agriculture; extractive industries and distributive trade take place in a tensed atmosphere. There is loss of confidence of investors internally and especially, externally (Aminu and Pate, 2013). Sadly, contemporary Nigeria is plagued by an endless array of conflicts. The list is in-exhaustive, and ranges from the intractable Boko Haram insurgency, the protracted Niger Delta militancy, the lingering farmers versus herders conflicts, political tensions, ethnic tensions and religious confrontations. Caught in this quagmire, it becomes pertinent to explore possible alternatives towards amicably mitigating conflicts in the country. It is against this backdrop that the current study interfaces the trending practice of new media engagement and the management of these conflicts, a contribution that will go a long way to demonstrate the implications of the new media to the process of peace building in the country.

Media and Conflict: Interrogating the Nexus, Concerns and Basic Observations

Conflict attracts media attention and generates massive coverage by the media because it meets the criteria for news selection or possesses the qualities for being news worthy (Oso, 2017). Arguing in the same direction, Lippman cited in Folarin (1988) lists conflict, negativity, strangeness, consequences, surprise, geographical proximity and prominence among the criteria for news selection. To Mu'azu and Gani (2009):

> Conflict often generates media attention because it fits into the definition of what is considered news by professional journalists: timeliness, unusualness, drama, consequence and proximity (both geographical and psychological), and involvement of personalities who become important definers. These elements help the media to define news in negative terms and conflict tends to provide the raw material that fits in the definition (p.10),

There are other reasons, too, why the media give much coverage to conflict situations, as Pate (2002) suggests, that conflict sells. Thus, with the drive for profit by the private media and commercialization policy in government owned media outfits, media organizations find ready raw material in conflict. Mu'azu and Gani (2009) again state that conflict tends to satisfy the public demand for information, and as business outfits, the media improve on their sales figures, attract more advertising revenue and make profit. In an attempt to win audience, the media resort to the use of catchy headlines and stimulating (or sensational) leads to maintain the audience. This Akinfeleye (2003) decries when he states that:

> The argument in Nigeria today is to determine whether the press in headlines, news writing, news presentation, picture placements, features, editorial and the entire

> packaging of their newspapers, magazines, online writing and production have been bought over by the economic/profit business making function of their outfits rather than seeking for truth and adhering strictly to their professional ethics which are the corner stone of responsible journalism (p.68).

Jimoh (2008) stresses this point further, stating that sensationalism in the media inflames conflict, and detracts them from their social responsibility role to society. Subscribing to the same point of view, Maikaba, cited in Mohammed (2006) notes that the audience are always interested in news that are disruptive and not normal, and this explains why mass media proprietors compete to satisfy the desires of their patronizes by prioritizing conflict stories. As Shehu (2005) contends, a lot of literature have been generated on the media's role in the origination, escalation or spread of conflicts in most part of Africa. Most of these assumptions are based on the old notion of the media being all-powerful, and possesing the ability and capability not only to dictate to the audience what they should believe in, but also influence their opinions, attitudes and motivations.

Notwithstanding what many conceive as the negative and retrogressive role of the media in conflict management, many still see the media as useful instruments for conflict transformation and peace building process. Okunna and Popoola (2017, p. 118) posit that "as major stakeholders in the democratic project, the media have the responsibility of contributing toward the emergence of a peaceful society…" They argue that media have potentials which, if well harnessed, will go a long way in managing and resolving conflict. In their words: "the Nigerian mass media system can be transformed into a peaceful media system whereby it plays a central role in the promotion of peace in the country's multicultural and diverse socio-political environment." It is in affirmation to this that Terzis (2002, p. 20) posits that a fair and accurate journalism and media programming that builds confidence and counteracts misperceptions has a significant positive role to play in both conflict prevention and transformation (*see also* Targema, 2018).

Uchem (2003) states that responsible and useful communication can heal conflict, stating that there cannot be peace and understanding among people unless they have better and truer information about one another which is the idea behind conflict reporting. Conflict reporting has, thus, emerged as an area that gains the attention of communication and media scholars recently. It is conceptualized as the art and practice of gathering, compiling and disseminating information about conflict through the mass media. It involves reporting and writing on events and situations of conflict or impending conflict, its magnitude and consequences, conflict reporting has also been called peace journalism or conflict sensitive journalism (Anaeto cited in Wilson, 2009). Conflict reporting in the new media makes for the introduction, interpretation or clarification of issues in a conflict situation to which many have given little or no attention at all. Orhewere (2004) states that the media in conflict reporting put the reader to task- to think, brainstorm, dialogue, agree and disagree, accuse and counter-accuse with the aim of bringing a lasting solution to the conflict.

To this end, the role of the media in conflict reporting is basically for conflict resolution. It is to bring about peace; it is to bring the parties in the conflict to a peaceful common plane. Conflict reporting assists citizens to rebuild their society and to reduce tension or at least not exacerbate the existing divisions (Ward cited in Wilson, 2009). According to Pate (2004), conflict reporting tries to depolarize the conflict by showing the two sides of a story, and to de-escalate by highlighting peace and conflict resolutions. Peace journalism seeks to minimize the rift between opposed parties by not repeating facts that demonize one side and set the stage for conflict. In conflict reporting journalists needs to work independently and take decision on everything from the headline, to the people to interview, selection of images, quotes and the language used, to the basic decision of what stories are covered and why (Park and Deshapriya, 2008).

Van de Veen as cited in Wilson (2009) adds that in covering conflicts stories, journalists should add an 'S' for solution and a 'C' for common ground to the additional 'five W's and H formula (who, what, when, where, why and how). This is simply corroborating the idea that the ultimate goal of conflict reporting is conflict resolution. The Nigerian mass media have fallen short of the expectations on conflict reporting for amicable resolutions in several respects, and have, thus, plunged the country into deeper levels of conflicts as a result of reckless, sensational and unprofessional reporting of the multiplicity of conflicts that have engulfed the nation. Pate (2013) and Pate and Oso (2017) summarize these common professional malpractices to include among others:

1. Promoting, by selective reporting, prejudicial stereotypes about groups and individuals.
2. Reporting inter-group conflicts out of their fundamental sociological, economic, political and other contexts. On many cases, media personnel merely respond to statements of politicians, ethnic champions, religious zealots and other interested parties rather than initiate their own independent inquiries about specific social conflicts.
3. Making generalized statements not supported by concrete facts and figures.
4. Attributing statements by individuals to collectives (groups).
5. Publishing of rumours as facts.
6. Publishing unfair and discriminating adverts.
7. Use of inflammatory language in news reporting.
8. Editors allowing the letters to the editor's column and opinion pages to be used for making inflammatory statements against some people or groups.
9. The use of inflammatory, misleading and sensational headlines to attract sales.
10. Demonization of certain ethnic, religious or political groups in an already divided and tensed society.
11. The use of cartoons to malign a community, group or individual.
12. Use of unrepresentative pictures
13. Un-objective and clearly biased reporting against some groups, individuals or communities.
14. Inappropriate use of language in reporting conflict stories.

15. Total blackout of some groups, individuals or community
16. Expression of ill-informed opinions by columnists, writers, etc. on issues that affect certain groups of people in the country.
17. Shallow and episodic coverage.
18. Use of hate/dangerous speech (*see also* Pate 2009, Pate and Oso, 2017).

New Media and Conflict Reporting in Nigeria: Insights from the Literature

New media platforms such as social networking sites offer good platforms for reporting of conflicts. First, interactivity as a feature which they possess enables for discussions of conflicts, a practice that could lead to amicable resolutions if well handled. A typical example of this is readers' comments of online news sites that enable readers to comment freely on issues discussed in the news. Second, they are dehegemonized, i.e. they are open to all and sundry, hence, are not exclusively reserved for certain sets of people in society. Unlike the mainstream media that service the elite, new media platforms are mass oriented, and offer access to the media of communication to a larger segment of society. Thirdly, new media are delocated, and break spatial barriers. Here, new media can be utilized for the purpose of conflict reporting in the remotest environment, provided that the user is connected to the internet.

The fourth point here is that, new media are instantaneous in nature, and break temporal limitations. Meassages on conflicts can be communicated as the conflicts unfold. To crown these all, the multimedia nature of the new media enables for credibility of stories communicated, as pictorial, video and audio evidences are sought to support published stories on the platforms. These and many other attributes of the new media make them potent tools for reporting conflicts, a fact that becomes more glaring given the popularity of the platforms to the youth in the country. In the words of Dauda, Abubakar and Lawan (2017):

> … It is necessary to reiterate that social media platforms are agenda setters in public discourse because of their immediacy, interactivity, anonymity and virtual characteristics. Thus, social media provides an opportunity for public engagement on public discourse among participants who are actively and generally referred to as 'netizens'… (p. 253).

Little wonder, therefore, that whenever a conflict breaks out in any part of the country, they are initially reported by the new media platforms before the conventional media take clue. Traditional media in the country can no longer supress stories on conflicts again; as such conflicts are often widely reported by 'netizens'. Most new media platforms possess the journalistic attributes of the mainstream media. The online news sites are good examples of this, where news platforms such as Naij.com, Point Blank, Scan News, Premium Times, Sahara Reporters and Information Nigeria among a myriad of other platforms share stories with adequate evidences and follow-up investigations to support the stories. Social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, WatsApp and Google+ among others are not left out, as

they are actively engaged in reporting conflicts in the country. Today, many people get to know about conflicts in the country through these platforms, and also utilize the platforms to engage in active discussions of such conflicts.

Similarly, since the new media platforms have massive appeal, government, governmental agencies, non-governmental organizations, faith-based organizations and pressure groups among others maintain conspicuous presence on them, and deploy them to sensitize the masses on the value of peace. Advocacy missions are conceived and executed using new media platforms, a good example here is the central role the new media played in the #BringBackOurGirls movement (Jibril, 2017). Stakeholders, engaged in sensitizing people on the benefits of peaceful coexistence in the country, have courted new media platforms, and many regard them as panacea to their success. Media maligning or marginalization of certain groups in terms of conflict reporting is increasingly becoming difficult nowadays, as the new media enable the marginalized population to tell their own story by themselves, thereby giving a holistic picture of the conflict. These feats are achieved by the new media due chiefly to their numerous attributes discussed earlier on in the study.

Contending Issues and Key Concerns

In spite of these significant feats which the new media have recorded in terms of conflict reporting in Nigeria, they are still greeted with a litany of issues that are fast threatening their successes, and polling them negatively in the management of ethno religious conflicts. Researches, in this regard, approach the new media from a multi-perspectival point of view, but the key issue remains that the platforms are chiefly unregulated, and hence, lack decorum, professionalism and order. Takwa (2017) echoes this sentiment, thus:

> The largely unregulated social media whose access is coming closer to the population on a daily basis, thanks to the availability of mobile apps and android phones is now an opportunity for people to conceal identities and express sentiments, hate statements and at times, insults that would have been censored in the traditional media outlets. These new media eschew the norms and ethics of reporting, and have largely contributed to deepening of societal cleavages. They have deeply ignored the sensitivities in society (p. 11).

This position is the major premise of studies about the negative impact of the new media on conflict reporting in the country. Accordingly, several other researchers share this sentiment. Dauda, Abubakar and Lawan (2017) who investigate the pattern of interaction of online readers' commentators on the *Boko Haram* insurgency in Nigeria on two YouTube clips decry the prevalence of hate speech on the platform. In their words:

> It is also worrying that the discourse use abusive and derogatory terms… the magnitude and the impact of the ubiquitously vituperative and vitriolic comments in some of the discourses of the *Boko Haram* insurgency observed can further

> escalate conflicts and create more 'monsters'. This conclusion is drawn within the conclusion that Nigeria is already overwhelmed with several challenges and does not need the spread of venomous ideologies to further aggravate her situation (p. 267).

Jibril and Targema (2017) in a similar endeavour investigated the pattern of interaction of Nigerian online commentators on President Muhammadu Buhari's maiden media chat vis-à-vis the national unity question that seems to be a panacea for development. Their conclusion is not farfetched from the above. Their final submission is that:

> …the way readers were polarized along regional lines in their comments, posting negative and injurious comments, has the capability of reducing the platform into a chaotic and indiscreet battlefield where readers engage in war of words, which portends nothing good for the unity of the country. This can consequently affect more, the already epileptic unity of the country. Given the nature of the readers' comments that the presidential media chat received on the online news sites, this paper submits that the platform has the potentials of intensifying the divides that characterize the Nigerian state. The realization of the much desired unity in diversity in the country via this platform is not only far from reality, but also signals a cataclysmic danger to peaceful coexistence (p. 190).

Lack of moderation/regulation, therefore, is a major concern as far as the new media and conflict discourse in Nigeria are concerned. Professionalism is another serious challenge of the new media in terms of conflict reporting. Citizen journalists, who are not trained in the art of reporting, abuse the platform grossly by presenting one sided version to the stories. Most citizen reporters tell stories from their points of view, and do not care to balance the stories. The consequence of this act is that several gullible minds that rely on the platforms for information and do not fact-check are often mislead to believing the one-sided version of the reports. Closely related to this is the wide-scale spread of deliberate falsehood, mischief and outright lies on the platform to mislead the masses (Targema 2018). Another key issue with the use of new media in reporting conflict as noted by Targema (2018) is the use of gruesome and horrible pictures of victims of conflicts to accompany stories on the platforms. This practice has the ability of provoking emotions, and leading to reprisal attacks, thereby increasing the number of victims in the conflict.

Pate and Dauda (2015) observe that the new media are guilty of throwing caution to the wind in many instances and struggling to be the first to leak or report information, rather than be the first to leak or report facts accurately for public good and safety. The zeal to fact-check stories before publishing to ensure credibility is not as strong as the zeal to break the news first. Sensationalism is also very high on the various platforms, and thrives as a desperate effort to generate "clicks" or traffic to news sites. Misleading and emotional headlines and leads are the in-thing here. Such sensational stories are not healthy for effective conflict management, as they help to deepen the complexity of conflicts. New media users are also fun of promoting prejudicial stereotypes about

individuals through selective reporting, making generalized statements not supported by facts and figures or attributing statement by individuals to collectives (groups).

Similarly, most intergroup conflicts are reported on the new media platforms out of their socio-cultural contexts. This practice does not help in effective management of such conflicts, as the general public is often mislead to believing the skewed version of the report. Another worrying trend with the use of new media for conflict reporting is the use of inflammatory language. This is disastrous, and heightens tension when the individual, group or community being referred to responds spontaneously. The list of irresponsible practices that thrive on the new media platforms which are negative to conflict management is in-exhaustive. When juxtaposed with the positive side of the platforms in this regard, one is left to conclude that the new media platforms are at their best conundrums, and must be deployed with utmost caution to minimize their negative effects, if at all they are to complement the painstaking struggle to build peace in the conflict-ridden multi-ethnic Nigeria.

Conclusion

New media platforms have introduced a new dawn to the practice of journalism, especially as it relates to the reporting and discussion of ethno-religious conflicts. Its numerous opportunities such as interactivity, interconnectivity, delocatedness, multimedia, ubiquity and accessibility among others have far reaching impact on effective reportage of conflicts, most especially in a country like Nigeria where the mainstream media outfits are urban centered, and are not always readily available to report conflicts as they unfold and give the masses regular updates. New media fill in this gap, and empower the audience to report conflicts that occur around them for amicable resolutions. This, however, does not come without its challenges, as the platforms eschew the norms of conventional journalism, and allow for highly unprofessional and misguided journalism practice detrimental to conflict management and resolution.

To get out of this quagmire, the study subscribes to the view of Suntai and Targema (2015) that 'netizens' should exhibit a sense of responsibility in the course of their interaction on the new media platforms through self-regulation and rational judgment. This way, the vices associated with the new media will be minimized and their virtues maximized to enable them serve as conduits for conflict management in the country. It therefore, becomes necessary to re-interrogate the social responsibility question in the new media boom to give 'netizens' unlimited freedom attached with responsibility towards steering society to the path of progress. Lastly, the whole gamut of conflict sensitive and peace journalism is recommended to enable the new media platforms assert their relevance in the all-important struggle to minimize the wave of violent conflicts that have bedeviled present-day Nigeria.

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