New Media and Journalism: How Citizens Complicate Nigeria's Unmarketable Identity

By

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Abstract

New media journalism involves individuals gathering, processing and circulating information using computer technology platforms including websites and blogs, social and online communities. The aim of this study is to examine how new media, specifically citizen journalism compounds Nigeria's identity problems. The study, inclined to the qualitative approach, adopts in-depth interview as a method to elicit data from respondents. Stratified sampling technique has been used and ten (10) senior academic staff have been selected from Nigerian universities and interviewed online via the WhatsApp platform. Key questions bother on new media and how citizen journalists' practices complicate Nigeria's unmarketable identity. Findings show that the practice of reporting fake news and photo-shopped pictures that ridicule the integrity of Nigerians at home and abroad by Nigerians using the new media, especially on the social media, is a major factor compounding Nigeria's already battered image. The study concludes that apart from significantly compounding Nigeria's unmarketable identity, these practices partly deprive the country's citizens' quest to invest abroad. It therefore recommends periodic national orientation as a strategy that would enhance Nigerians' attitudinal change both at home and abroad.

Key Words: Citizens, Journalism, New Media, Nigeria and Unmarketable Identity.

Introduction

Nigeria appears no longer to be that attractive bride to business men, organizations and other nations within the international community. The

information on online news media and social media platforms cannot be exempted from sharing part of the blame. News about Nigerians who have been executed in Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, Singapore and other foreign countries over drug trafficking and other related offences abound in the media of communication. Also, the nations' citizens have been in the international news media for questionable reasons. Like many other online reporters, Erezi (2020) reports the widely publicized raid and arrest of Ramoni Igbalode, popularly known as Ray Hushpuppy, in Dubai over alleged fraud. Shortly after his arrest, Ososanya (2020) reported that companies in Dubai had begun to exclude Nigerian applicants from job vacancies apart from being barred from applying for tourist visas.

Nigeria's identity or image problem is so devastating that one wonders if there could be any remedy. Tostevin (2009) expresses this concern thus:

> What about the Nigerians imprisoned in Asia and Europe for smuggling drugs; the "419" fraudsters with their email appeals? The kidnappers and oil thieves of the Niger Delta? Those politicians who rig elections with fraud, intimidation and bribery? Those officials who see their positions merely as a chance to fill their boots and may be all too ready to subvert the courts or obstruct the people struggling to do business fairly? And how can Nigeria's image improve while it cannot regularly light up the homes of its people – despite enormous energy resources and billions of dollars spent? Does Nigeria suffer unfairly from an image problem or will it improve its image once it deals with its problems? (p. 1).

According to a popular corporate advert on the Nigeria's broadcast media stations aimed at rebranding the nation's image, Nigerians are considered as "Good People, Great Nation". However the numerous anti-social behaviours

of Nigerians home and abroad, which seem to surpass the positive exploits of the citizens, have become the major albatross to the rebranding project. Consequently, Nigerian citizens have been represented for few right reasons but more negatively in the international media. They constitute a greater percentage of illegal migrants from Africa to other countries and are considered sceptically at the points of visa applications while being monitored more closely than citizens of other nations at public events abroad. Nigeria is, no doubt, a victim of numerous and uncountable image crises at the international community.

Hardly is there any crime committed in some parts of the world without the mention of a Nigerian. Is it fraud, theft or prostitution in Dubai, Lebanon or Italy? Let us draw closer to home. The Nigerian Embassy in Ghana, Africa, was pulled down sometime in April 2020. That act was of utmost disregard for Nigeria and her citizens. Ghanaians had closed down Nigerian shops and demanded that they leave the country on several occasions. In South Africa, Nigerians were the greatest casualties of xenophobic attacks in 2019. Although some media purported that the Nigerian citizens were guilty of crimes that warranted assassinations and extra-judicial killings meted on them, there were scanty proofs to that effect, and most victims were never subjected to fair trials. Incidentally, Nigerians were flown back to their country in droves.

Back home in Nigeria, the proliferation of ethnic clashes, herdsmen attacks and the guerrilla war tactics of the dreaded “Boko Haram” (a religious sect that forbids western education), in addition to rising cases of kidnapping, armed banditry and general state of insecurity have placed the nation severally on the watch list of the United States of America and other European countries as “a no-go area.” Many International organizations have ranked Nigeria differently; some as the third most corrupt nation on earth and others

as the most inhabitable place in the world. Despite the unmarketable image of Nigeria caused by many anti-social behaviours such as advanced fee fraud, prostitution, kidnapping, ethnic and religious intolerance, drug trafficking and more, the advent of new media journalism appears to be compounding the nation's image crises.

New media journalism practice in the 21st century has posed greater implications for the nation, especially the citizen brand of journalism which is the focus of this discourse. Citizen journalists and their brand of journalism are today considered as the 5th estate. The periodic origin of Nigeria's identity crises may have been lost in myths and mystery but for decades, the nation's image at the international community has not been a pleasant one, no thanks to Nigerians' behaviour, now abated by new media activities. Before the advent of the new media – computer based technological platforms for transmitting information, journalism in Nigeria, as it was in many part of the world, was localized.

Before the advent of postmodernism, news on television, radio, newspapers and magazines in Nigeria did not have the capacity to spread across the borders to other nations. This was a common phenomenon in most countries especially in third world nations. During the modern era, conventional journalists were trained individuals licensed to gather and process and transmit information. They visited the scenes of events, interviewed news makers, took photographs and acquired first-hand information from the news sources. Magazine reporters were famous for investigative reporting that gave much credibility to the news stories. News that filtered out to the international community was, therefore, received with higher believability than what is obtainable today. Journalists were also cautious of unnecessary negative reports, even though they existed.

At the turn of the 21st century, heaven was let loose. News transmission through the new media would definitely be read, heard and seen in any part of the world. Technological breakthroughs and media convergence opened up opportunities for both trained and untrained persons to collect, process and transmit information to any person or group of persons in any part of the world. This group of reporters could truly gather or falsely make-up news stories for any reason and transmit to friends and readers on different media platforms in various parts of the world. Unfortunately, social media users, owners of blogs and publishers on websites hardly understand the extent to which their negative reports go to have devastating implication on the image of Nigeria internationally. Observably, their reports are malicious and mostly blown out of proportion. Some of them are blatantly false and unprofessionally written and circulated.

The emergent crop of journalists who are characteristically non-professionals, naive and untrained in the journalistic arts of news gathering, news analysis and news reporting are associated with the term 5th estate. Citing Duffy, Thorson and Jahng (2010), Noor (2015) defines a citizen journalist as an individual who is not a trained professional, but who nonetheless may report on his or her neighbourhood or community. Thus citizen journalists include everyone who report and transmit their 'likes', love, anger and comments on the web sites, blogs and social media platforms including Tweeters, Facebook and Whatsapp. They cut across all ages of youths and adults of different walks of life. They include the literate and the non-literate, the rich and the poor, the highly intelligent and the intelligently weak. Characteristically, they are bound as friends, followers or cyber communities on various social media platforms. Others are hosts of blogs and web sites.

The concern of this study is the compounding of Nigeria's identity crises by new media journalism and how best to address it. The aim of the study is to

find out how the new media journalists, specifically the 5th estate compound the identity crises of Nigeria. Specifically, the study seeks to identify the new media platforms mostly used by citizen journalists to compound Nigeria's unmarketable image; to assess the nature of citizen journalists' communications that compound Nigeria's unmarketable image and to find out how the practices of citizen journalists compound Nigeria's unmarketable.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study include:

i. To identify the new media platforms mostly used by citizen journalists to complicate Nigeria's unmarketable identity.
ii. To examine the nature of citizen journalists' reports that complicate Nigeria's unmarketable identity.
iii. To find out how citizen journalists' practices complicate Nigeria's unmarketable identity.

Research Questions

i. What are the new media platforms mostly used by citizen journalists to complicate Nigeria's unmarketable identity?
ii. What is the nature of citizen journalists' reports that complicate Nigeria's unmarketable identity?
iii. How do the practices of citizen journalists complicate Nigeria's unmarketable identity?

Conceptual clarification

Beal (2020) states that 'new media' is used to describe content made available (even on demand through the internet) using different forms of electronic

communication made possible through the use of computer technology and applications; examples include websites, blogs and emails.

The definition of new media appears to be contentious because of the contextual meaning of 'new'. Friedman and Friedman (2008) corroborate this position thus:

> The use of the word "new" implies a time factor, so it may seem reasonable to define the term in a temporal context. However, this is a never-ending enterprise. There will always be something "new" on the horizon. It would probably be a good thing to retire the word new in this context – a better choice would be networked media – but, as of now, it is meaningful (p. 4-5).

This view explains the fact that what is known as new media may also become old media tomorrow hence the old media today was once new. This suggests that the focus of new media is not limited to the time of emergence only but also to the uniqueness of the communication opportunities not inherent in the old media.

Conceptually, 'new media' is a term that connotes novelty of some channels of communication with qualities that differ from the 'old media'. Friedman (2008) refers to the likes of newspapers, magazines, television and radio as 'old media' and the likes of blogs, wikis, online social networking, virtual worlds and other social media forms also referred to as web 2.0 as 'new media'. Gitelman and Pingree (2003) describe 'new media' as 'media in transition' to describe the period of time which the medium is emergent, which is 'now' in contrast to the old media. Characteristically, Lievrouw and Livingstone (2002) identify three aspects of the new media namely: the message (communication and its practices), the technology (i.e. the medium) and the social context in which it is used and these aspects are associated with

specific technologies and practices such as collaboration, digitization and telecommunication.

Manovich (2002) defines new media as cultural objects which use digital computer technology for distribution and exhibition. Generally, 'new media' is a catch term used to define all that is related to the internet and the interplay between technology, images and sound. These definitions suggest that new media is concerned with producing content in a way that gives authors a full range of communication opportunities, from coding websites, writing articles and press releases, creating images, videos and audio as well as info-graphics. Hasan (2013:670) and Beal (2020:1-5) have identified seven (7) types of media namely:

i. *Websites*: a site on the World Wide Web with each containing a home page which is the first document the users see when they enter the site which may contain additional documents. The site is owned and managed by an individual, company or organization.
ii. *Blogs*: a short term for web-log; a blog is a web page that serves a publically accessible personal journal for an individual, which often reflects the personality of the author and which is typically updated daily.
iii. *Chat rooms*: a virtual room (room used to promote the chat metaphor) where a chat session takes place with users or people communicating using on-screen text, typed in real time.
iv. *E-mail*: short for electronic mail; a platform for transmissions of messages, which are typically notes entered from the keyboard or electronic files stored from disc, over a communication networks.
v. *Social media*: a variety of web-based platforms, applications and technologies that enable people to socially interact with one another online through applications such as Facebook, YouTube,

Whatsapp, Twitter, Digg, blogs and other sites that have content based on user – generated content (UGC).

vi. *DVD and CD-ROM media*: DVD is short for Digital Versatile Disc or Digital Video Disc with minimum of 4.7 and maximum of 17 Giga Bites (GB) of data commonly used as a medium for digital representation of movies and other multimedia presentations that combine sound with graphics while CD-ROM, short for Compact Disc – Read Only Memory is an optical disc capable of storing large amount of data up to 1GB.

vii. *Virtual reality environments*: artificial environment created with computer hardware and software and presented to the user in such a way that it appears and feels like a real environment. Virtual reality is sometimes used more generally to refer to any virtual world represented in a computer, even if it is just a text-based or graphical.

Other examples of the new media platform enumerated by Hasan (2013:670) and Beal (2020:1-5) include mobile apps, web advertising, digital cameras and integration of digital data with the telephone, such as internet telephony.

Etymologically, Iyorza (2014) states that the word "Journalism" is derived from the French word "Journal", which is derived further from the Latin term *diurna* or *daily*. In ancient Rome, a handwritten bulletin known today as the first newspaper was called *Acta Diurna* which meant *Daily Acts* in Latin, sometimes translated as *Daily Public Records*. The original content of the *Acta Diurna* (simply called *Acta* or *Diurna* or *Acta Popidi* or *Acta Publica*) were results of legal proceedings and outcomes of trials. Later, the content was expanded to public notices and announcements including noteworthy information such as prominent birth, marriages and deaths. Pamphlets,

gazettes, news books, news sheets, letters and many more came to be termed newspaper or journals.

Hasan (2013:174) defines journalism as the art of collecting, analyzing, verifying and presenting news regarding current affairs, events, trends and issues involving people. Ike (2005:121) also defines journalism as the trade, technique or profession of reporting news for the public by various means. Conservatively, journalism is generally an occupation that involves writing for journals, but in particular for newspapers and magazines. By expansion, journalism is the practice of gathering information, writing and disseminating news to the public. It is a profession that strives to satisfy the information needs of people in the society. As a discipline, Iyorza (2014:1) explains that journalism involves gathering, selecting and processing of news based on the needs and curiosities of the public and to fulfil man's natural quest for answers to 'Who?' did 'What?' 'Where?' 'When?' 'Why?' & 'How?' (5Ws and H) in the society.

New media journalism therefore involves gathering, processing and circulating information using computer technology platforms including website and blogs, social and online communities by individuals. It is a new form of journalism made possible by technological innovations, specifically, the computer. New media journalism is different from the conventional form of journalism. In new media journalism, the availability of the technology and the easy access to new media platforms at an almost-free cost gives anyone the opportunity to practice the art of gathering, processing and reporting information to the public. Consequently, the advent of new media has given birth to a new breed of journalists who are observably unskilled; who are not conversant with the ethics of the profession and who gather, process and disseminate information at will without recourse to the fact that certain information can defame the character of some individual, promote excessive

hatred among communities that exist within the same geographical entity or threaten national security in severe cases. This category of journalism practice is known as "citizen journalism."

Britannica (2020) defines citizen journalism as one that is conducted by people who are not professional journalists but who disseminate information using Web sites, blogs and social media. Bowman and Willis (2003) define citizen journalism as the act of non-professionals playing an active role in the process of collecting, reporting, analysing and disseminating news and information. Noor (2015) explains that:

> Citizen journalism is a concept in the media that refers to journalistic activities of ordinary people…(who) report the issues concerning them. Citizen journalism has enabled people to raise their voice on what they feel need attention. These people are, thus, termed as 'citizen journalists' (p. 59).

Thus citizen journalists were members of the audience who were on the receiving end of the main stream media messages. By extension, they are more of participatory and democratic journalists whom Base (2008) identifies with types of journalism known as: public journalism, civic journalism, stand-alone journalism, networked journalism, open source journalism, crowded source journalism, collaborative journalism, grassroots journalism, community journalism and so on. The similarity of purpose and practice by citizen journalists has earned them the name "5th estate".

Members of the fifth estate, according to Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), have available platforms such as blogs and micro blogs (Twitter videos, hyperlinks, pictures and so on), content communities (Flickr, Instagram and YouTube), social networking sites (Facebook, Whatsapp etc.), virtual game worlds and virtual social worlds. These are the platforms that birthed the 5th estate. The

social media sites and their users are, thus considered as the 5th estate, which Saidharan describes as "a societal or political force or institution whose influence is not consistently or officially recognised; a class or group existing in addition to the traditional four" (online).

Citing Roy Peter Clarke, Saidharan (2017:1) defines the 5th Estate out rightly as "…including the fourth estate, the idea and value of a professional press corps as a way of informing and engaging the populace and holding the powerful accountable; a vision necessary but insufficient for democratic life (online)."

Thus, the fifth estate is not simply the blogging community alone but an extension of the media and "net worked individuals" enabled by the internet in ways that can hold the other estates accountable. Characteristically, the 5th estate strives through sharing of ideas using texts, pictures, drawing, videos and hypertext. The silent features observably include "likes", "comments" and "shares".

Empirical Review

Out of the new media categories, Busari (2019) asserts that social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter have faced criticism over the proliferation of fake news on their sites but on WhatsApp, the messaging service is ubiquitous in Africa; it is particularly challenging to establish the source of false information because of the platform's end-to-end encryption. Social media platforms are major carriers of fake news. The implication of fake news can be very devastating on the image of a country. It puts individuals involved in a negative light and creates an aura of alienation around them. Fake news on social media also gives the international community the impression that the country is desperate, fraudulent and

dubious. The magnitude of fake news' damage on the identity of a nation has attracted the concerns of stakeholders. Adegoke, (2018) states:

> Despite Facebook's attempts to root out hate speech, and the efforts they are making to detect and remove false information, hundreds of inflammatory posts are slipping through the net. Some of these posts report real atrocities, but are couched in language designed to incite ethnic hatred. Others spread false reports of killings. Many contain half-truths – rumours and insinuations that spread from phone to phone… (p. 1).

There are attempts to control the fake news spread on the social media in Africa. Akwagyiram (2020) states that at least two men in Kenya, including a popular blogger, were arrested for publishing false information about the virus (Covid-19) on Twitter, an offence punishable by up to 10years in prison or a fine of 5million Kenyan shillings (R875000). Despite these issues, journalism still strives on the social media, fuelled by the 5th estate.

Saidharan posits that the nature of the 5th estate can be determined by its limited structure ideology, inexpensive access to social media platforms, untrained and unskilful participants (including the professionals), unlimited time of access to social media platforms, ease of correction and editing on the social media and ease of agenda setting by selection and discussion of any topic of choice (online). However, the 5th estate, through the social media, has helped citizens to become writers, announcers and presenters rather than being only the audience. It gives freedom to individuals, a development that has made the social media to be considered as the 5th estate.

Sormanen and Dutton sum it up that the social media reinforce the potential of the 5th estate (https://journals.sagepub.com). The social media provides the platform for the fifth estate participants to be active especially on political,

economic and social matters in the society. In this postmodern dispensation, the social media is the 5th estate of the society, the nature of the realm exudes positive tendencies in bringing about information, education and entertainment to members. The 5th estate had been effective for mobilization of protesters in the Egyptian revolution of 2011, the November 6 protest of 47 women's protest against ban on women's driving of cars in Saudi Arabia, Indian protests against government's foreign policies and a host of revolutions in the 21st century Arab spring. However, the existing discourse in Nigeria indicates that the 5th estate's activities are tilting towards national disintegration more than integration and there appears to be a challenge in correcting the anomaly. Consequently, Adegoke (2018) makes reference to a scenario in Nigeria thus:

> … a series of horrifying images began to circulate on Facebook. One showed a baby with open machete wounds across his head and jaw. Another – viewed more than 11,000 times – showed a man's skull hacked open. There were pictures of homes burnt to the ground, bloodied corpses dumped in massive graves and children murdered in their beds. The images helped to ignite a blaze of fear and calls for retribution against the Fulani… But the facts didn't matter to the person who created this post and didn't register with the people who liked it… It is the kind of story that, in a region already torn by ethnic and religious violence, can have dangerous consequences (p. 1).

Nigeria's identity crisis is a product of her citizens' behaviours as reported in the mainstream media (including online platforms). The stories are true, yet the manner of reactions by the citizen journalists communicates negative news about the country to different parts of the world. For instance, Aidoghie (2019) reports the execution of Mrs Kudirat Adesola Afolabi in Saudi Arabia over drug trafficking, Dabiri-Erewa (2019) reports another Nigerian's (Wahid

Somade) arrest at Jeddah Airport over possession of 1,138 kilograms of cocaine, and added that 20 Nigerians were already on death row in Saudi Arabia. A European Union report (2019) states that at least 14.3million Nigerians were into drug abuse while Olokor (2019) reports Nigeria as one of the world's most corrupt countries in the world, pegging the nation at 144th position out of 180 countries, as at 2018.

Adebayo (2018) reports CNN's poverty ranking with the headline "Nigeria Overtakes India in Extreme Poverty Ranking", emphasizing that 87 million Nigerians were living on less than 1.90 dollars a day. Onojeghen (2018) citing the National Agency for the Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) in Nigeria, reported that 10,000 Nigerian ladies are forced into prostitution yearly in Italy while Channels Television (YouTube 2017) reports that over 3000 Nigerian girls were into forced prostitution in Turin, Italy. Idris (2019) reported that Nigeria was struggling to rescue 20,000 girls from Mali sex trade. The various reports from the global media indicates that Nigeria's image internationally is in crises but the research gap calling for a bridge is how the new media has contributed to the construction of Nigeria's unmarketable image.

Methodology

This study is inclined to the qualitative research approach. In-depth interview method has been adopted to elicit data for discussion. This has been augmented by data from secondary sources such as book, journal publications, corporate websites and news sources. Multi-stage sampling technique has been employed to arrive at the eventual sample for the study. First of all, ten (10) universities have been randomly selected while the stratified random sampling technique is used to select Professors and Senior Lecturers from media and mass communication departments of the selected universities across the country. A total of 10 senior academics (Senior Lecturers,

Associate Professors and Professors) have been selected from to constitute the eventual sample for the study. Online interviews were held via WhatsApp to elicit data, given the national lockdown that was imposed during the period of the study. Data obtained from the interviews are presented and discussed below.

Presentation and Discussion of Findings

RQ1. What are the new media platforms commonly used by citizen journalists to complicate Nigeria's unmarketable identity?

Nsirika (2020) states:

Nsirika (2020) states that out of the new media categories, most Nigerian citizen journalists use the social media more to report fake news to others on the same platform and the feebleminded anywhere in the world tend to believe what they read on social media but critically minded people would not take fake stories seriously. Ojorgu (2020) corroborates this view and adds that the social media platforms are "the major bearers of fake news about Nigeria." Kur (2020) and Udoka also makes several references to social media platforms including WhatsApp Communities, Facebook and Tweeters as major hosts of fake news in Nigeria. Specifically, Okiyi (2020) states that "the availability of blogs compound issues related to Nigeria's identity..." This invariably implies that the social media platforms, especially blogs, are the new media categories commonly used by the Nigerian citizens to construct Nigeria's unmarketable image. Britannica (2020) had earlier indicated that citizen journalism is conducted by people who are not professional journalists but who are opportune by the New Media platforms to disseminate information using Web sites, blogs and social media.

RQ2. What is the nature of citizen journalists' reports that complicates Nigeria's unmarketable identity?

Respondents' description of citizen journalists' reports are unpalatable. Okiyi (2020) describes the nature of Nigerian citizen journalists' reports about Nigeria and Nigerians as "emotional, mischievous and divisive in nature." Udoka (2020) says most comments on Nigeria by citizen journalists "pay little attention to truth" and are characterized by "a mixture of facts, fiction and sensationalism." Ojorgu (2020) describes the reports that de-market Nigeria's identity as lacking "truthfulness, objectivity, impartiality and fairness." Rabiu (2020) views citizen journalists' reports on Nigeria as "fictitious" while Kur (2020) describes them as "lies, propaganda, half-truths and fake." Ekwok (2020) says the citizen journalists' reports about Nigeria are "unreliable, unverifiable and fake." There is an argument to the description of the nature of citizen journalists' reports on Nigeria. Melchizedek (2020) argues that citizen journalists reports represent reporters' views granted by the nature of the brand of journalism and do not significantly construct Nigeria's unmarketable image in any way different from the reality. Ciboh (2020) adds that "citizen journalism permits all classes of people with different status to report their views." The implication of this argument is that citizen journalists' reports may be de-marketing Nigeria's image in the international community but the fault is that of Nigerians given them the opportunity to do so. Bowman and Willis (2003)'s assertion that citizen journalism as the act of non-professionals playing an active role in the process of collecting, reporting, analyzing and disseminating news and information is therefore validated.

RQ3. How do the practices of citizen journalists complicate Nigeria's unmarketable identity?

Citizen journalists' reports exaggerate and make jest of serious events about Nigeria, thereby giving the country a bad name. Chia (2020) insinuates that by "promoting divisive culture and ethnic interests", citizen journalists create the impression that Nigeria is an avenue of chaos and ethnic clashes; a place quite unsafe to dwell. Ojorgu (2020), Okiyi (2020), Udoka (2020), Nsirika (2020) and Ciboh (2020) share the opinion that citizen journalists' bias comments and write-ups on political, economic, religious and leadership crises on Facebook, Tweets and Whatsapp and the under-reporting of events by bloggers promotes the impression that Nigeria is a politically unstable, economically depletive and religiously divisive entity bereft of development in the near future. The implication of such an unmarketable picture of Nigeria from the activities of the 5th estate can be so discouraging to prospective investors to the country.

In addition, respondents imply that through textual reporting of fake news on social media platforms, reporting photo-shopped pictures and tweeting negative comments about Nigerian leaders falsely and indiscriminately; using the new media platforms to perpetrate financial fraud and producing and sharing videos that satirically mock violence in the country, Nigerians could be describe as untrustworthy, dubious and deceptive; easily slanderous, defamatory, fraudulent and inhumane – a new media cause that has resulted in the country's unmarketable identity.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The obscurity surrounding the terms 'new media' and 'social media' is hereby demystified. 'Social media' is a category of new media that allows for social interaction among users or subscribers; platforms such as WhatsApp,

Facebook, Instagram, Tweeter and blogs. The advent of new media technology has given the opportunity for mass participation of individuals on the social media platforms. The nature of participants on the social media platform can best be described as heterogeneous – made up of different characteristics namely the literate and non-literate, the poor and the rich, local and international residents and many more. Thus the 'new media' is the chief driver of globalization. Although the new media channels have been helpful in information generation and circulation, the activities of users especially on the social media have done more harm than good to the image of citizens of many nations including Nigerians.

The rise of citizen journalism in Nigeria, like in any other part of the world, is a product of the emergence of the social media within the new media. Whereas citizen journalism is an opportunity that allows for freedom of participation of more individuals – trained and untrained – in the media process of gathering, processing and circulating news from observation, opinions and interpretations, citizen journalists in Nigeria have used the social media platforms to de-market and complicate the identity of Nigerians at home and abroad. This has been accomplished through the circulation of fake news, photo-shopped pictures that ridicule the nation's political, economic and socio-cultural integration efforts and horrible make-up videos that create tensions among religious sects in the country.

Nigerians' image is already unmarketable at the international community, no thanks to the illicit and anti-social behaviours of Nigerians reported in the main stream international and national media but suffice it to conclude that citizen journalists have complicated Nigerians' identity through their participation and promotion of fake and inciting information on the social media platforms. Today Nigerians are perceived within the international

community as dubious, fraudulent, untrustworthy and inhumane; qualities that have denied the citizens the requisite international respect for human rights.

Consequently, this study recommends that:

i. The Federal Government of Nigeria, through the Ministry of Information and National Orientation should organize a new media and citizen journalists' seminar or conference in every state of the federation to sensitize participants against lopsided reporting and to stress the need for balanced reporting about the country's positive achievements and exploits to help the promotion of Nigeria's national identity.

ii. Nigerians participants on social media platforms should desist from generating and forwarding or circulating fake news that are defamatory of their fellow citizens at home and abroad. The social media proprietors should continue to partner with Nigeria and intensify the fight against fake news, inciting videos and derogatory tweets that are capable of increasing tension among Nigerians of different ethnicity and religions.

iii. Public and private broadcast and print media organizations in Nigeria should join the campaign against fake news and inciting reports on social media as part of their corporate social responsibility by allotting broadcast time or space that would allow for in-depth discourse on the implications of negative reports on Nigeria's image and Nigerians identity, stressing Nigerians attitudinal change in behaviour at home and abroad.

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