

Social Media and Political Communication: Analysis of Nigerians' Perception of Government officials' Communication on Twitter

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Abstract

Nigerians are more and more turning to social media to engage with political actors. This study investigates how 400 social media users engage with two key Nigeria's government spokespersons on Twitter, namely: Mr Femi Adesina, Special Adviser to the President on Media and Publicity and Mr Shehu Garuba, Senior Special Assistant (SSA) to the president on media and publicity. Purposively using Twitter as a case study, the study seeks to interrogate how the two federal government image-makers communicate with their Twitter followers, consume the information and thus become aware of government efforts in development. The study employs the quantitative research method and is based on the Media Dependency Theory. Findings show that more educated Nigerians (graduates and postgraduates) follow Mr Femi Adesina on Twitter than Mr Shehu Garuba. The study also reveals that Nigerian government officials concentrate their Twitter energies overwhelmingly on election and campaign issues rather than on other issues that are of utmost concern to Twitter followers. Findings also show that more male than female Nigerian Twitter say their lives were not impacted by the information they get from government officials on Twitter. The study recommends that government spokespersons should use Twitter to address the genuine concerns of voters rather than concentrating mainly on elections and campaign issues since Twitter offers them a unique opportunity to listen to the electorate.

Keywords: Social media, Twitter, Political Communication, Nigerian Government

Introduction

Social media have revolutionised political communication globally (Stieglitz & Dang-Xuan, 2012; Coelho et al., 2017; Arackal, 2020). Governments and political figures have resorted to social media to engage not only with their constituents and voters but also the citizenry in general. This social media engagement by political actors implies political communication, defined as the "intentional, explicit and implicit of some messages with political, initiated by the actors who are acting under an exercise of power" (Browning, cited in Tasente, 2014, p. 17). Particularly, social media use in political communication has taken a very unique dimension since the US elections of 2008 in which Barack Obama used Twitter extensively for his campaigns with the slogan "yes we can" which resonated well with younger people (Molony, 2014). He replicated this in the 2012 elections. Both Donald Trump and Joe Biden also extensively used social media for their election campaigns in 2016 and 2020 respectively and contributed to their emergence as US presidents in the said elections. Social media also played a significant role in India's 2014 general elections (Stieglitz & Dang-Xuan, 2012; Arackal, 2020) in which Mr Narendra Modi emerged as prime minister by connecting with young Indians online.

Since the birth of political communication after the two world wars, political actors have used media to communicate with voters in particular but in the contemporary time, politicians have turned to social media to engage with their voters such that social media have now become one of the most effective tools for political communication (Agrawal et al., 2011; Arackal, 2020). This paradigm shift in political communication is particularly enabled due to the ubiquity and internet accessibility by citizens including those who live in remote and inaccessible terrains. For Arackal (2020), political communication is hinged on three major elements: ideology, propaganda and persuasion. In other words, political communication centres on "the deployment of

social media in putting forth one's or party's ideology, propagating one's or party's agenda, and persuading the voter" (p.1). Citizens are then able "to read into the official messages (media text/content) that are being sent, interpret them, and draw conclusions for themselves" (Arackal, 2020, p.1). In a sense, social media have become the new "public square" or "town hall" (Bruns, 2012).

As of 2020, about 2.8 billion people globally were active on Facebook while as of 2019, Twitter had about 330 million active users. Similarly, as of 2020, the total number of social media users in Nigeria was approximately 28 million (Tankovska, 2021) representing a penetration rate of 13% (Kemp, 2020) of Nigeria's approximately 200 million population (citypopulation.de, 2021). For Egielewa & Ate (2020) and Varrella (2021), Whatsapp and Facebook are the most consumed social media in Nigeria. However, for Egielewa (2020), the most consumed social media platforms are Facebook, YouTube and Whatsapp. Twitter occupies the sixth position of the most used social media platforms in Nigeria (Varrella, 2021) as shown in Figure 1 below.

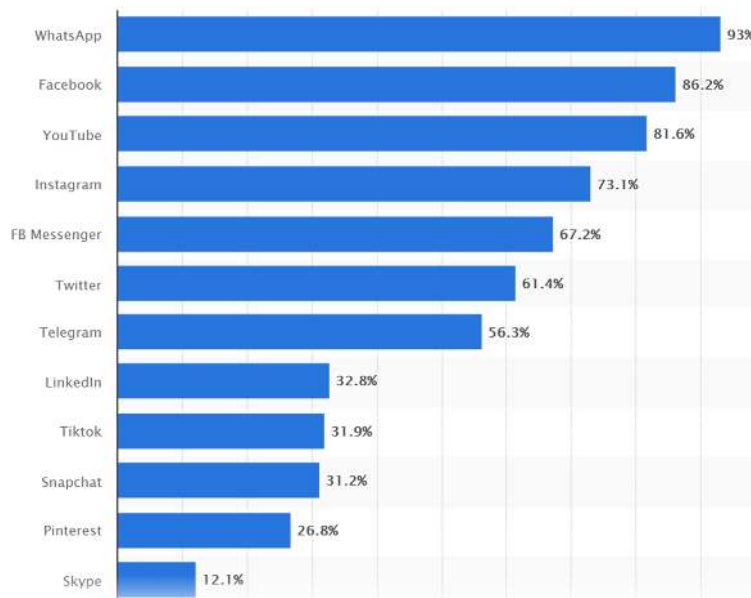


Figure 1: Social media platform consumed by Nigerians as of 2020. Source: <https://www.statista.com> (2021).

Although politicians, political parties, government officials, government appointees, political foundations use social media like Twitter and Facebook to engage with their constituents and increase political participation, Stieglitz and Dang-Xuan (2012) posit, however, that Twitter seems to be the favourite social media platform for political actors not only to spread their ideologies but also to communicate general information about their activities while at the same time entering into direct dialogues and encouraging political discussions with voters (Stieglitz & Dang-Xuan, 2012). Politicians and political actors, thus, use Twitter not only as a medium to engage with citizens, it also serves as a vehicle to gauge public opinion on policies and political positions as well as to build public support for public policies and decisions (Zeng et al. 2010).

In a study, Golbeck et al., (2010) analysed 6000 Tweets from members of the United States Congress and found out that US parliamentarians use Twitter primarily for self-promotion such as reporting on their daily activities with no emphasis on explaining parliamentary activities and promoting transparency. They found out, however, that Twitter essentially facilitated direct communication between Congresspeople and their voters. This finding is similar to a study by Ammann (2010) which found out that US senators use twitter basically to engage with existing and potential voters.

Another study of the US 2010 midterms elections which analysed 12, 008 tweets of 74 senate candidates found out that campaign and mobilisation for elections constituted the major contents of their tweets (Haber, 2011) while Jackson et al., (2019) investigated how Greek politicians use Twitter and other social media and found out that Greek parliamentarians use Twitter to attract and involving citizens in their political activities which ultimately translates to more votes and electoral victories for such politicians.

The above studies do not interrogate government officials' use of social media who are not necessarily politicians but government appointees and how and what they communicate since they are not candidates for elections but must simply promote the activities of their employers. This is a gap that this study intends to interrogate. To situate this study in context, two government officials who are spokespersons of Nigeria's President Muhammadu Buhari elected for a four-year term on May 29, 2015, and re-elected for a second term of four years on May 29 2019, namely; Mr Femi Adesina, the President's Special Adviser on Media and Publicity and Mr Shehu Garuba, the president's Senior Special Assistant (SSA) on media and publicity and how they communicate with citizens via Twitter. Thus, this study sets out to address the following research questions:

Research Questions

1. What social media platforms do Nigerians consume?
2. To what extent do Nigerians patronise Twitter?
3. To what extent do Nigerians follow Nigerian government officials on Twitter?
4. What kind of activities do Nigerian government officials communicate with citizens on Twitter?
5. To what extent do government officials' Twitter communication impact citizens?

Hypothesis Test

H₀ (Null hypothesis): There is no significant relationship between the gender of Nigerians and the impact of information communicated to them by Government officials on Twitter.

Literature Review

Use of Twitter in Political Communication

Information Communication Technologies (ICTs), particularly the advent of the Internet, have transformed the way politicians conduct their business and thus revolutionised political communication in the modern era (Poulakidakos & Veneti, 2016). Not only the ubiquity and accessibility of the internet but in recent times also, social media have created opportunities for politicians to connect with their electorate in unique and creative ways especially as these relate to political campaigns. In particular, the advent of social media such as YouTube, Facebook and Twitter also termed "2.0" have given politicians new opportunities for campaign strategies, fundraising, gathering of information and mobilisation of supporters (Bimber & Davis, 2003; Carpenter, 2010).

The US 2004 presidential election was a turning point for social media deployment for politics-related activities due to their extensive, innovative and extensive use in that election, a scenario was repeated in the 2008 and 2012 elections. Vermont Governor Howard Dean in 2004 successfully used the new applications for fundraising and mobilization. In 2008, both Barack Obama and John McCain used networking sites to connect with fans such as My.BarackObama.com (MyBO) and McCainSpace. (Trippi, 2004; Carpenter, 2010; Veneti, 2014) respectively. Indeed, Barack Obama's 2008 election has been described as an "internet election victory" (Molony, 2014).

Similarly, Poulakidakos and Veneti (2016) found out that since 2014 Greek politicians have resorted to Twitter as the new "public sphere" to communicate with their electorates due to the lack of trust in the mainstream media, declining trust in politicians in general and the exponential increase of entrants of many voters on Twitters thus increasing the reach of politicians in a less cumbersome communication channel, a more cost-effective method of communicating with voters and an avenue to rebuild waning trust from voters. This interest of Greek politicians

in Twitter over and above the traditional modes of communication was also driven by the fact that many of 418, 700 active Greek Twitter users as of 2014 were primarily more interested in political issues than any other issues.

Theoretical Framework: Media System Dependency Theory (MSD)

The Media Dependency theory, one of the theories that recognise the audience as an active part in the communication process, was developed by Sandra Ball-Rokeach and Melvin DeFleur in 1976 and combines elements from psycho analytics & social system theory (communication theory.org, n.d). The Media Dependency theory is a further development of the Uses and Gratification theory but with less focus on effects.

The theory seeks to establish a link between media, audience and the larger social system. In other words, since information from real life is, in part, insufficient and limited, the media can be deployed to supply the missing information and thus close the gap. Thus, Cheng and Mitomo (2015) understand media dependence as the *“relationship between the individual goals and the extent to which these goals are contingent upon the resources of the media system”* (p.4). With the audience extensive use of media, the tendency is thus created in which the audience increasingly becomes dependent on the media. In this context, the audience can realise some of its goals through the power of the media (communication theory.org, n.d). The degree of dependence of the audience on the media is directly proportional to individual satisfaction, social stability and audience activeness.

At the individual satisfaction level, the audience will become more dependent on the media to the extent the media satisfy the information needs of the individuals concerned. If the satisfaction is less, the dependence on the media will also be less (Loveless, 2008; communication theory.org, n.d).

At the social stability level, the members of a society will depend on the media to the extent to which the information therefrom helps the society achieve stability particularly in periods of strong social change such as conflicts, riots and elections. The dependence of the audience on the media is due to the need for changes in the society and the opportunity for making new critical decisions to which the media plays a major role by disseminating the necessary information needed for such social stability (Loveless, 2008; communication theory.org, n.d). Loveless (2008), however, suggests that contrary to the view that media dependency increases during the period of social change, media dependency is simply a strategy adopted by consumers for the sake of seeking information of itself. In buttressing this view, Chen (n.d) posits that the audience depended on the media simply *“to navigate unfamiliar places, make decisions, and learn how to interact with others”*.

At the level of audience activeness, the audience can choose the media to consume and depend on the media of their choices. Such choices are conditioned on factors such as economic conditions, society and culture. In other words, the audience will depend on a media of their choice if there are no alternatives to fulfil their information need. If such alternatives exist, then their media dependence decreases (Loveless, 2008; communication theory.org, n.d).

Ognyanova and Ball-Rokeach (2015) investigated the impact of new media on political efficacy arguing that dependence on online sources propels political participation of citizens. This study is anchored on the media dependency theory because the current study which seeks to interrogate how Nigerian citizens interact with politicians via Twitter is a study of social media dependence both on the part of government officials who now see it as one of the most powerful tools to reach their political base as well as the citizens who see Twitter as a *“barrier-free”* avenue to express themselves to their political officials and avoid the cumbersome process of booking appointments to see their elected officials.

Methodology

The descriptive research method is adopted for this study. The descriptive research design investigates existing phenomena to determine the extent and impact of those phenomena on society which can be quantitative or

qualitative (Aeet.org, 2001; Apuke, 2017; Egielewa & Idogho, 2020). The quantitative research method is adopted for this specific study because it seeks to analyse the responses of Nigeria’s Twitter users’ engagement with Nigeria’s government officials on Twitter. The sample size for this study is 400.

Participants

The study population are entire residents of Etsako West Local Government of Nigeria, one of the eighteen Local Government Areas of Edo State, Nigeria. The total population of Etsako West Local Government is 260, 700 (Citypopulation.de, 2021). The major thirty-five (35) towns in Etsako West Local Government Area include Auchi, Jattu, Agbede, Ughiole, Iyamho, Iyuku, Ayogwiri, Apana, Iyora, Afowa, Afashio, Ikabigbo, Irekpai, Ogbido, Ayaoghena, Ikholo, Uluoke, Ugbhenor, Idato, Ayua, Imeke, Elele, Sabo Iyakpi, Ibiename, Ughieda, Iyereku, Egbogio, Jagbe clan (Ikhwa, Imiokono, Inhianmhen, Imogian) and Awain clan {Ewora, Idegun, Ama, Ibhioaba} (Wikipedia.org, 2021).

A questionnaire with ten semi-structured questions was prepared and distributed to 470 randomly selected respondents in ten randomly selected villages in Etsako West Local Government Area as shown in Table 1 below using mainly churches, mosques and higher institutions between 15th January to 15th March 2021. The distribution of 470 copies of the questionnaire conforms with Krejcie and Morgan (1970) formula for sample size determination who determined the minimum sample sizes required for researches but didn't place any maximum number. In other words, a sample size that is above the minimum required for a study increases the reliability of the study. According to Krejcie and Morgan (1970) formula for determining sample size, a population of between 250, 001 and 500,000 people requires a sample size of 384. Thus, the sample size for this study is 384. However, 470 copies of the questionnaire were distributed out of which 400 were returned for analysis. 400 retrieved copies of the questionnaire represent 104% of the required sample size of 384. The sample size 400 which is more than the required size of 384, therefore, increases the reliability of the study.

S/no	Name of Village In Etsako West LGA in Edo State	Questionnaire samples distributed	Valid questionnaire samples obtained
1	Afashio	50	27
2	Afowa	40	25
3	Apana	40	36
4	Auchi	50	48
5	Ayua	40	39
6	Elele	50	43
7	Jattu	40	35
8	Ikholo	50	42
9	Iyamho	70	68
10	Iyora	40	37
11	Total	470	400

Table 1: Sample size obtained for this study

Presentation of Results

In general, 62% of the respondents were males while females were 38%.

What is your age?

	Frequency	Percent (%)
18 years & below	66	16.5
19-30 years	90	22,5
31-45 years	152	38
46-60 years	43	11
61 years & above	49	12
Total	400	100

Table 2: Age of respondents

Table 2 above shows that those within the age bracket of 31 and 45 (38%) years filled the questionnaire the most.

What is Your Educational Level?

	Frequency	Percent (%)
Primary School Leaving Certificate	10	2.5
SSCE/WAEC/GCE	98	24,5
OND/NCE	65	16
BSc/HND	151	38
Masters/PhD	59	15
Others	17	4
Total	400	100

Table 3: Educational level of respondents

Table 3 above shows that 75% of respondents identify as Christians, 25% as Muslims and 0% as African Traditional Religion worshippers.

What is Your Occupation?

	Frequency	Percent (%)
Public Employee (Employed by Govt Bodies)	115	28
Self-employed (Entrepreneur)	110	27
Student	117	30
Unemployed	22	6
Retiree	36	9
Total	400	100

Table 4: Occupation of Respondents

Table 4 above shows that most respondents had at least a BSc or HND (38%) while the occupation of respondents in Table 4 below shows that the majority of the respondents were students (30%).

Research Question 1

What social media platforms do Nigerians consume?

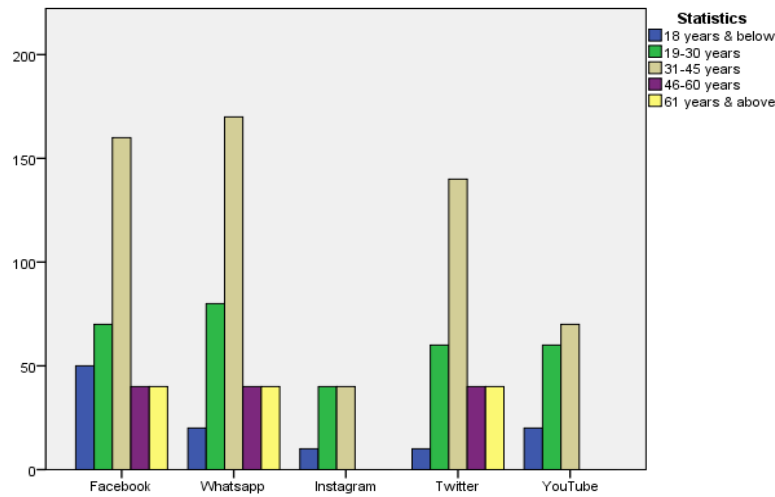


Figure 1: Social media platform consumed by Nigerians.

Data in Figure 1 show that Nigerians between the ages of 19 and 45 consume social media the most (72%) implying that the most active years for social media engagement is from 19 to 45 years. Youngest Nigerians from 18 years and below consume social media the least with only 9%. However, while the youngest Nigerians opted for Facebook as their preferred social media platform, all other age groups consumed Whatsapp the most. In a nutshell, Whatsapp (80%) and Facebook (60%) are the most consumed social media platforms by Nigerians while Instagram (20%) is the least consumed.

Research Question 2

To what extent do Nigerians patronise Twitter?

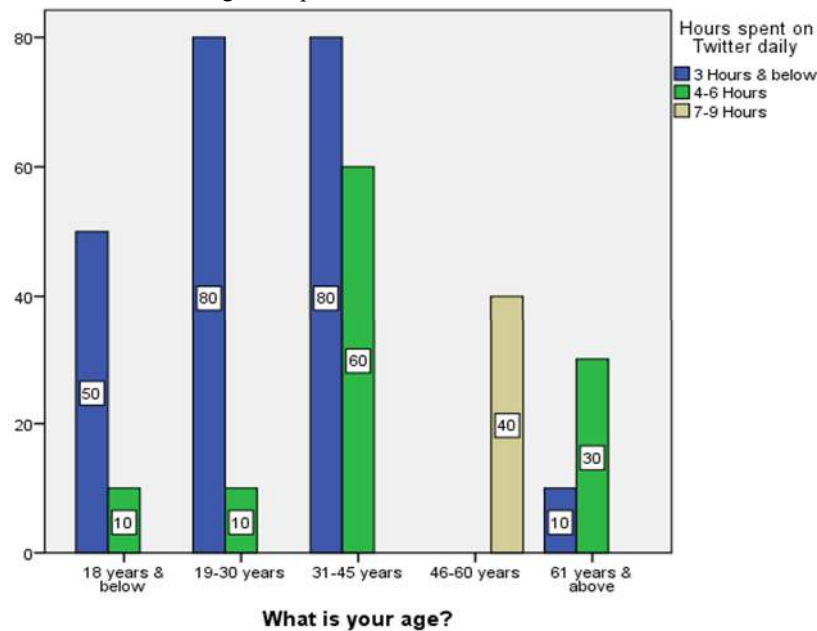


Figure 2: Nigerians' daily consumption of Twitter.

Figure 2 shows that Nigerians generally spend less than three hours on Twitter daily. Unlike the data in Figure 1, Figure 2 shows that Nigerians between the age range of 19 and 45 years consume Twitter the least, while Nigerians between the ages of 46 and 60 years consume Twitter the most.

Research Question 3

To what extent do Nigerians follow Nigerian government officials on Twitter?

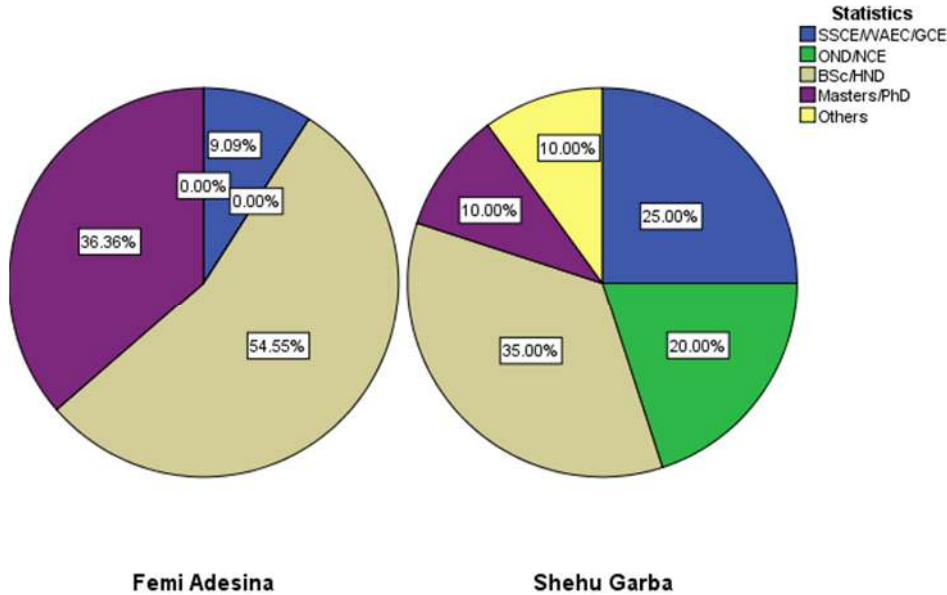


Figure 3: Educational levels of Nigerians who follow Nigerian Government officials.

Nigeria's Presidential Aide	Postgraduates (MA/PhD)	Graduates (BSc/HND)	Diplomas OND/NCS	SSCE Holders	Primary School Certificate Holders	Others	Total
Femi Adesina	34 (36%)	52 (55%)	0 (0%)	9 (10%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	95(60%)
Shehu Garba	7 (10%)	22 (35%)	13 (20%)	16 (25%)	0 (0%)	7 (10%)	65 (40%)
Total	41 (26%)	74 (46%)	13 (8%)	25 (16%)	0 (0%)	7 (4%)	160

Table 5: Total Number of Nigerians Who Follow Femi Adesina and Shehu Garuba on Twitter and Their Educational Levels

Figure 3 above shows that more Nigerians followed Mr Femi Adesina, the President’s Special Adviser on Media and Publicity (60%) on Twitter than Mr Shehu Garuba, the president’s Senior Special Assistant (SSA) on media and publicity (40%) in a ratio three to two. In other words, in every ten Nigerians on Twitter, 6 followed Femi Adesina while 4 followed Shehu Garuba. Similarly, more educated Nigerians followed Mr Femi Adesina on Twitter than his counterpart Mr Shehu Garuba. In other words, while 91% (n=86) of all the Twitter followers of Mr Femi Adesina are Graduates and Postgraduates, only 45% (n=29) of the followers of Mr Shehu Garuba are Graduates and Postgraduates. Conversely, more medium level Nigerians (SSCE holders) follow Mr Shehu Garuba 25% (n=16) than Mr Femi Adesina 10% (n=9).

Research Question 4

What kind of activities do Nigerian government officials communicate with citizens on Twitter?

		Main activities of Nigerian Government officials on Twitter					Total
		Campaigning/Election	Showcasing Govt Developmental activities	Personal Exaltation	Attack against opponents	Addressing voters concerns	
	Male	177	119	22	84	30	432
	Female	123	71	28	66	0	288
Total		300	190	50	150	30	720

Table 6: Nigerians' perception of the main activities of Government officials on Twitter.

Table 6 above shows that generally Nigeria's government officials dwelt more on political campaigns and elections than any other issue on Twitter. This view was shared both by the male and female followers of the officials. Indeed, political campaigns and elections alone represent 42% of issues that government officials engage with Twitter followers on. Conversely, using Twitter to address the concerns of voters occupied only 4% of the attention of government officials. In other words, remaining in office matter more to Nigeria's government officials than addressing any concerns of voters in a ratio of ten to one.

Research Question 5

To what extent do government officials Twitter communication impact citizens?

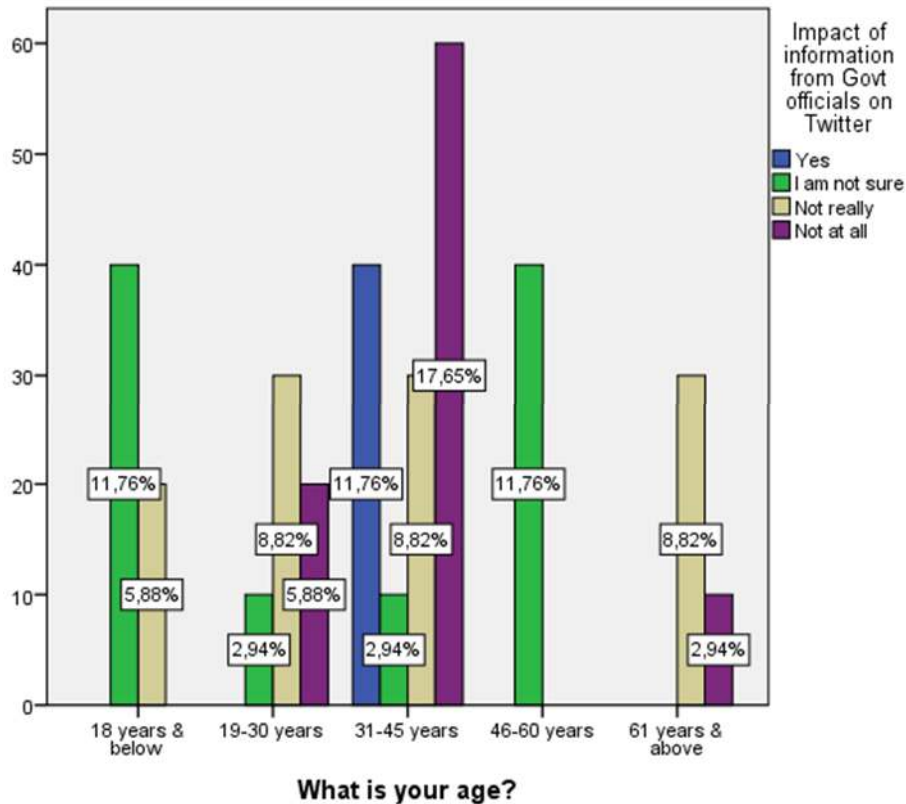


Figure 4: Conviction of Nigerians about Government activities based on information received from Govt officials on Twitter.

Data from Figure 4 above shows that 55% of Nigerians who follow government officials on Twitter say that the communication of such government officials did not have any significant impact on their lives. In other words, approximately 3 out of every 5 Nigerians who follow government officials on Twitter are not impacted by the information they get from the officials. This may be because the majority of the information from such government officials centre more on perpetuating themselves in office rather than addressing the genuine interests and concerns of Nigerians.

Hypothesis Test

H0 (Null hypothesis): There is no significant relationship between the gender of Nigerians and the impact of information communicated to them by Government officials on Twitter.

Chi-Square Tests			
	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	36,360 ^a	3	,000
Likelihood Ratio	40,412	3	,000
Linear-by-Linear Association	31,142	1	,000
N of Valid Cases	340		

Table 7: Nigerians' perception of the impact of the communication of Government officials with them on Twitter.

Given a predetermined alpha level of significance at 0.5 and the degree of freedom at 3, the chi-square results from the above Table 7 gives the X² at 0.000. With a corresponding probability level of between 0.10 and 0.05, the p-value is below 0.05 at 0.000. Thus, with a p-value of 0.000 which is less than the conventionally accepted significance level of 0.05 (i.e. $p < 0.05$) the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis accepted. In other words, there is a significant relationship between the gender of Nigerians and the impact of information communicated to them by Government officials on Twitter. This means that a Nigerian is more likely to be impacted by the information from government officials on Twitter if the person is male or female. In the case of this research, most males (75%) say that information communicated to them by Government officials via Twitter did not impact their lives significantly compared to their female counterparts (25%). This confirms this study's research question four that seeks to investigate the impact of the information communicated by government officials to Nigerians on Twitter from the gender perspective.

Discussion

Findings from this study have shown that Nigerians between the ages of 31 and 45 consume social media platforms the most whereas youngest Nigerians from 18 years and below consume social media the least with only 9%. Also, findings show that while Whatsapp and Facebook are the most consumed social media platforms, Instagram (20%) was the least consumed. These findings confirm previous studies by Egielewa & Ate (2020), Varrella (2021) and Tankovska (2021) which found out that Whatapp and Facebook were the most preferred social media platforms consumed by Nigerians. Similar studies by Egielewa (2020) found out that Facebook, YouTube and Whatsapp were the most consumed social media platforms in Nigeria.

Similarly, results show that Nigerians spend an average of three hours on Twitter daily. Nonetheless, Nigerians within the age group of 46 and 60 years consume Twitter the most. This result implies that older Nigerians consume Twitter more than younger Nigerians.

Findings reveal that more Nigerians and also more educated Nigerians follow Mr Femi Adesina, the President's Special Adviser on Media and Publicity (60%) on Twitter than Mr Shehu Garuba, the president's Senior Special

Assistant (SSA) on media and publicity (40%). Similarly, more educated Nigerians follow Mr Femi Adesina on Twitter than his counterpart Mr Shehu Garuba. Findings also show that 91% of Mr Femi Adesina's Twitter followers are Graduates and Postgraduates compared to 45% of Mr Shehu Garba's Twitter followers who are Graduates and Postgraduates. This may be because Femi Adesina has a Master's Degree while Garba Shehu has only a Bachelor's degree.

Results from this study show that Nigerian government officials, in their Twitter communications with followers, in nine out of every ten cases, concentrate efforts on issues that bother on political campaigns and elections and on how to win subsequent elections than on issues of utmost concern to their followers and electorate. In other words, perpetuating themselves or their bosses in office matter more to Nigeria's government officials, a finding that confirms studies by Golbeck et al., (2010) and (Haber, 2011) which found out that US senators use Twitter for their self-promotion to increase their electoral value and another study by Jackson et al., (2019) which found out that Greek politicians use Twitter for their electoral benefit. These findings, however, negate studies by Stieglitz and Dang-Xuan (2012) and Zeng et al. (2010) which found out that Twitter was the favourite medium for political actors to engage with voters to gauge public opinion on policies and to build public support for public policies.

Politicians and political actors thus use Twitter not only as a medium to engage with citizens it serves also as a vehicle to gauge public opinion on policies and political positions as well as to build public support for public policies and decisions (Zeng et al. 2010).

Finally, findings reveal that Nigerians are not impressed with government officials' communications with them which didn't impact their lives positively. This may be partly the effect of government officials concentrating their Twitter communications on electioneering and campaign issues rather than on issues that interest voters. That 3 out of every Nigerians are not convinced about communications from government officials in Twitters' indicates that the goal of Twitter communications by government officials to gauge public opinion on policies and to build public support for public policies (Zeng et al., 2010) was not being achieved as the majority of Nigerians are not impressed by such communications. Following a chi Square hypothesis test, this research found out that more male gender (75%) than female (25%) do not believe information communicated to them by Government officials via Twitter impacted their lives positively.

This study confirms the basic tenets of the theory of Media Dependency, in which it posited that the audience is an active part of the communication process and that since information, in reality, is insufficient and limited, the media supply the missing information and thus close the gap (Loveless, 2008; Mitomo, 2015; communication theory.org, n.d). This study shows that citizens and voters resorted to Twitter to engage with government officials. Unfortunately, this study reveals that Nigerians are disappointed because their motive of engaging with government officials about issues that concern them are not being addressed by government officials on Twitter.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Based on the above findings, some conclusions can be drawn. Middle age Nigerians (31-45 year) consume social media the most with Whatsapp and Facebook being the most preferred social media platforms. Nigerians spend an average of three hours on Twitter daily with older Nigerians (46-60 years) consuming Twitter the most. Furthermore, more educated Nigerians (graduates and postgraduates) follow Mr Femi Adesina, the President's Special Adviser on Media and Publicity on Twitter than Mr Shehu Garuba, the president's Senior Special Assistant (SSA) on media and publicity. Also, Nigeria's government officials concentrate their Twitter energies overwhelmingly on election and campaign issues rather than on issues that are of utmost concern to Twitter followers. Since the Twitter communications of government officials are overwhelmingly skewed towards only elections and campaign issues, Nigerian Twitter followers are also not convinced that the information they get from government officials would impact their lives significantly. Although this research is not large enough to

make a sweeping generalisation about Nigerian Twitter users in general, it is, however, representative enough to understand Nigerian Twitter users' behaviour in the research population and thus such a study can be replicated in other Nigerian towns and villages and this can then increase the possibility of a generalisation or refutation of the findings.

A Chi-square hypothesis test shows that men view the impact of government officials communications with Twitter followers lower than their female counterparts. The choice of the media dependency theory as the theoretical foundation for this study is justified because Nigerians now increasingly depend on Twitter to engage with Politicians, a shift from the overdependence on physical contacts via elections and campaigns.

Following the outcome of this study, the following are recommended:

1. Younger Nigerians should be more active on Twitter as a way to engage with political actors.
2. Nigerians should embrace Twitter more since it is an opportunity to interact with political actors.
3. Nigeria's government should investigate why male Nigerians view the impact of government officials communication with Nigerian Twitter users lower than their female counterparts.
4. Political actors should use Twitter to address the genuine concerns of voters rather than concentrating mainly on elections and campaign issues.

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