Chapter 7
Navigating the Nexus between Social Media, Political Scandal, and Good Governance in Nigeria: Its Ethical Implications

Essien D. Essien
University of Uyo, Nigeria

ABSTRACT

The advent of the social media revolution in contemporary time has had a phenomenal impact in almost every area of human endeavor in many societies. However, social media has some credibility burden that could hinder its effective use and also produce unintended consequences such as political propaganda, and other unwholesome activities as it affects politics and governance. This study sought to assess the nexus between social media, political scandal and good governance in Nigeria. It also assessed the success or otherwise of the institutional counter-measures in checkmat- ing the excesses of social media. Situated within the framework of reputation repair and social responsibility theories, the paper acknowledges that the conventional mass media has ties with the political and economic forces in the society, thus, are somewhat incapacitated in rising to the societal challenges. Consequently, the paper presents the social media as a veritable alternative, arguing that social media tools have what it takes to serve as a platform for citizen participation in governance.

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INTRODUCTION

The media continue to be a fundamental component of scandal politics in many countries of the world with the situation in Nigeria reaching a crescendo in contemporary times. Today, the media is no longer simply conveyors of political scandal but they are active participants in scandal politics (Baran, 2010). This however is simply because there is a changing media environment which has recorded important implications for the rise of scandal politics. The rapid and pervasive growth of social media technologies and their relative ease of use and availability have made social media a popular form of communication (Navetta, 2011). Thus, the world over, a certain trend is emerging with an overriding logic, capable of presenting the social media, not only as the fastest acceptable medium of communication, but as a form of ‘digital Darwinism’ indicating that the social media constitutes “the survival of the loudest and most opinionated” (McQuail, 2010).

Earnestly, social media and blogs have today become important components of journalism. In fact it is a phenomenon that has assumed the momentum of a revolution in Journalism. They narrow the distance between journalists and the public. They encourage lively, immediate and spirited discussion. They can be vital news-gathering and news-delivery tools. It is assumed that most actors and bloggers are journalists who should uphold the same professional and ethical standards of fairness, accuracy, truthfulness, transparency and independence when using social media (Akasike, 2009). In spite of this representation, we are now ever than before faced with several challenges such as scandal, cybercrime, misrepresentation, and other fraudulent practices. This has made the work of deploying the new media platform for an effective, functional and proactive management and dissemination of information for the wellbeing of the society distorted. In fact, it is unmistaken to state that there is so much information in the cyber space today, such that, our basic challenge now is how to manage it properly for the optimization of society’s ends. Interestingly, since the advent of globalization, the Internet and the new media have become vital tools of interaction and networking in private and public organizations (Baran, 2010).

In Nigeria, with the signing into law of the Freedom of Information, Act by Mr. President on 28th May, 2011, we are now faced with the challenge of deploying the new media platform for effective management and dissemination of information. Statistically speaking, social networking now accounts for over 20.5% of all time spent online by citizens in Nigeria, Egypt and South Africa. Also, a total of 123 million people age 13 and older in the Nigeria, Egypt and South Africa use mobile devices (Okunna & Omenugha, 2012). This has nevertheless increased exponentially lately. In the same vein, Twitter is said to have processed more than five hundred
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