

Social media as the fifth estate in Nigeria: an analysis of the 2012 Occupy Nigeria protest

Uwalaka, Temple

Presentation Outline

- Introduction
- Aim and RQs
- Data Collection
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Introduction

- Occupy Nigeria was a socio-political protest that started on Monday 2 January 2012 in response to the removal of the fuel subsidy by the Federal Government of President Goodluck Jonathan.
- In terms of scale, it is one of the largest protest in the Nigeria since the 'Aba Women Riot' of 1929 - who protested against the imposition of tax by the colonial government.
- Protest activities included anti-government songs, street bonfires, highway blockades, or converging on parks where leaders and celebrities addressed protesters.
- This level of protest activity is arguably made possible because of changes in communication practices and technologies had increased information sources and dissemination channels, helping Nigerians to be more informed about democracy (**Hari, 2015**)

Aim and Research Questions

Aim:

❖ *This study examines the role that social media played in the organization of the protest and in holding mainstream media accountable during the protest.*

Research questions:

- How did social media use impact the planning and organization of the protest?
- How did the action or inaction of mainstream media impact the planning and organization of the protest?

Data Collection

Semi-structured qualitative interviews with 19 students from the University of Lagos, Lagos State and Rivers State University, Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria who participated in the 2012 Occupy Nigeria protest.
RQ 1 and 2.



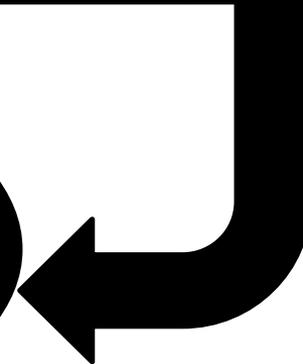
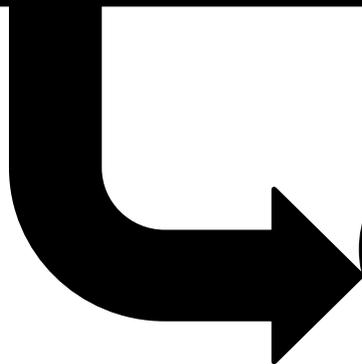
Transcribed the interviews, imported them into Nvivo for analysis

Analyzed 13, 031 contents from protesters posts and tweets about the 2012 Occupy Nigeria protests using the key term and hashtag '#occupynigeria'.
RQ 2



Phase one was scraped from the web using Netlytics on 15 March, 2016 while phase two was collected on 20 December, 2017 using Ncapture. These posts and tweets were gathered using Ncapture and Netlytics, subsequently they were imported into Nvivo for analysis.

Categorise interviews and users' posts and tweets into themes with focus on what they are posting and tweeting about the 2012 Occupy Nigeria protest.



Findings

Social media platforms were used most by the protesters to plan and organise for the 2012 Occupy Nigeria protest

I visited Facebook during the protest and saw a suggestion for me to join the group 'Occupy Nigeria Movement' and I did. I saw interesting comments and posts from those who were already in the group that spurred me to share my views... It was here that we agreed to go and register our displeasure to the government by engaging in a civil protest. I joined the offline protest on the third day as the venues were far from my house and there was no means of transportation to go to the agreed protest venues until the third day (Interview 15).

NTA is a government owned media, RSTV is a state owned, government media, AIT tilts and has political connection with the PDP; Channels TV tilts towards the APC. So, who would want to bite the finger that feeds him? The mainstream media covered the events half-heartedly. In the other hand, Broadcast stations like CNN and BBC - you find them in America and Britain have and practice the libertarian media ideology. So, they projected the protest and their coverage was from the perspective of the citizens. They projected the views and yearnings of the Nigerian citizens (Interview 6)

Findings also show that the local mainstream media acquiesced to the pressure from government officials by refusing to cover the protest at its inception until they were forced to do so by the protesters.

'NTA fools showing us how to swim when there better things to know'

'It's time we #Occupy NTA ...they aint carrying the news...'

'#Occupy NTA till they broadcast #OccupyNaija live to the world'

'Occupy NTA anywhere in Nigeria, they must show the protest'

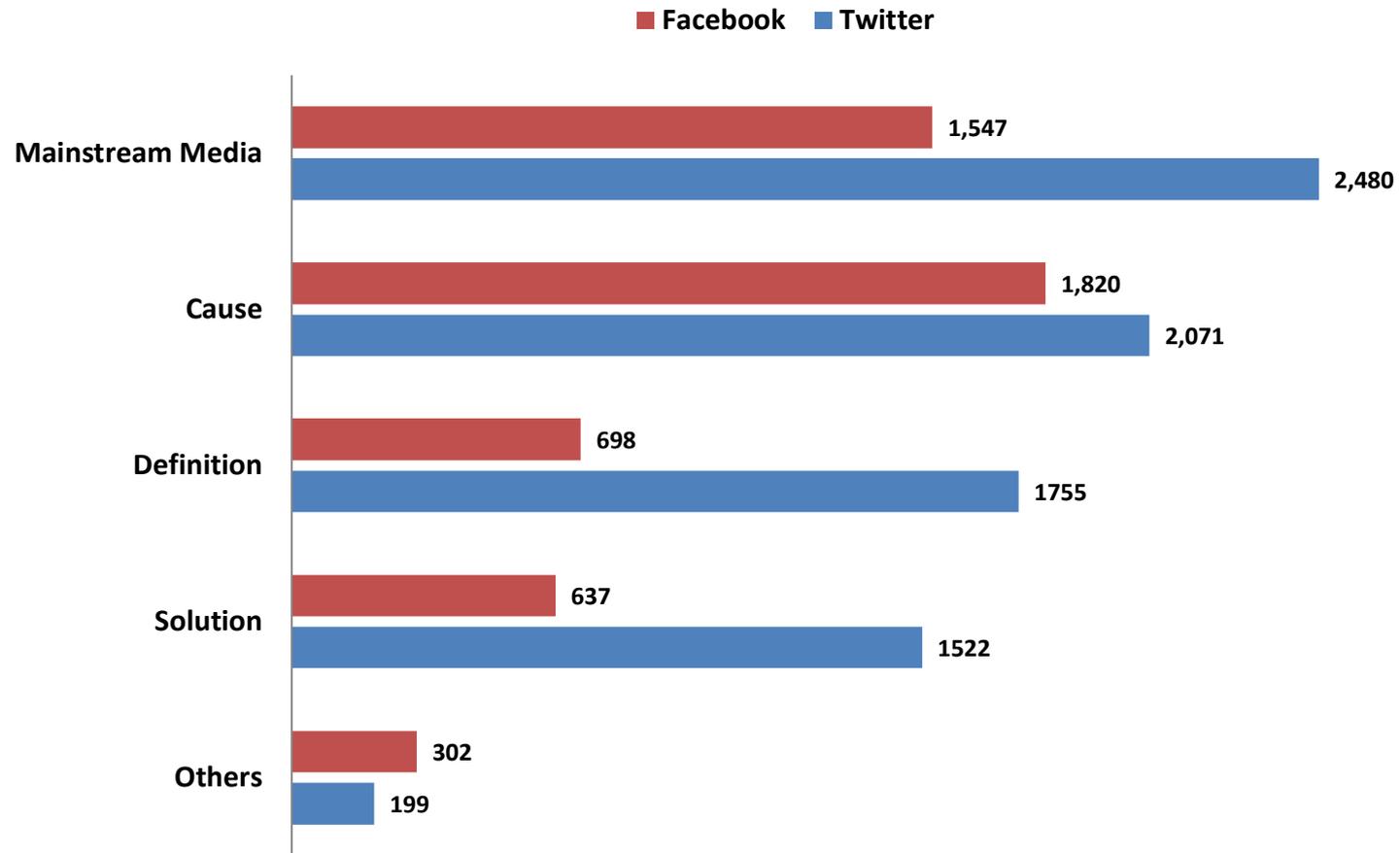


Figure 1. Online protesters' posts and tweets themes during the protest (N=13,031)

- *The local mainstream media refused to cover the protest at its inception until they were forced to do so by the protesters.*
- *This perceived inaction by the local mainstream media was cited by some of my interview participants as a source of motivation to participate in the protest.*
- *Using social capital theory, this paper argues that social media – fifth estate, brought about interaction, socialisation, collective engagement, and liberation that was not present in the mainstream media.*
- Social capital theory can be defined as capital captured through social relations (Lin, 1999, 2002)
- The fifth estate is hypothesized on collaborative engagements, open debate and discourses of social issue (Anyanwu, 2017).
The fifth estate emerges through ‘the network of networks’ (Dutton, 2009, p. 1).
- The social capital emerges from social media as ‘networked collective action’. This is its ability to influence public consciousness about issues that affect them (Anyanwu, 2017, p. 18).
- The distinction here is that such actions are not entirely sociological, but ‘sociotechnical’. This means that the audience is not a mere consumer but also a producer, whose technical skills come into play in their ability to circumvent corporate government gatekeeping (Anyanwu, 2017, p. 18).
- Beck and his colleagues made similar point when they argued that sub-politics indicate a weakening of bureaucratic and state oriented politics (Beck, 1994, 1997; Beck, Giddens, & Lash, 1994) .

Conclusion

- ❖ Social capital is 'directly related personal and collective well-being and an increased capacity for community to respond to threats and interventions' (Adams & Hess, 2010, p.141).
- ❖ Social capital developed through social media, increased the collective resilience of the protesters, their ability to share information and leverage from each other's strengths, as well as reassess their social structure, enabled them to overcome adversities and open new opportunities such as pulling the slumberous mainstream media into the main streets.
- ❖ The participants developed innovative information skills occasioned by the advent of social media which then increased their communicative power to bypass the highly concentrated mainstream media empires.
- ❖ The participants responded to the threat of the mainstream media neglect of their fourth estate role, and they achieved this through shared information that they leveraged from fellow protester's strength to overcome the challenge at the time - removal of fuel subsidy.