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Twitter Ban in Nigeria: A Metaphor for Impediment on Uses and Gratification Theory

Dumebi Olannye-Okonofua

Post Graduate Student: School of Social Science, Delta State University, Nigeria

Corresponding author email: dubiolannye@gmail.com

Abstract---The emergence of social media is an innovation that came into existence to bridge the barrier of physical distance between family and friends. This study examines the Twitter ban in Nigeria: a metaphor for impediment on uses and gratification theory. The cross-sectional survey research design method was adopted for this study and an online structured questionnaire was used for data collection. The study population is 120 active social media users. The Stratified random sampling method was used. Using Krejcie Morgan's sample size determination, the sample size was 92 Twitter users. Data collected were analyzed using Simple Percentages as a statistical tool. The findings revealed that the Twitter ban in Nigeria is truly an impediment to the uses and gratification theory. Also, Nigerians depend largely on Twitter to gratify their everyday needs; but with this new law, there is a gap in the need gratification of Nigerians. Twitter is a social media platform designed for the public to freely express themselves while staying connected; it is therefore recommended that the Nigerian government should not overlook the actual purpose of the platform in a bid to create an impression. It is concluded that the Nigerian government should consider uplifting the Twitter ban in Nigeria as it is perceived to be an infringement on the fundamental human rights of Nigerians. The study contributed to knowledge by establishing that the Twitter Ban in Nigeria is contrasting the uses and gratification theory which states: "how people seek out and pick certain media to meet their requirements". The study was limited to Twitter Ban in Nigeria; further research work can go ahead to expand the scope to involve other banned social media platforms in other countries.

Keywords---Nigeria, social media, Twitter ban, uses and gratification theory.

Introduction

Social media is a novel concept with enormous potential. Many firms are utilizing social media to improve their procedures as a result of its advancement. Social media, which began as a way to keep in touch with family and friends, has evolved into a commercial and entertainment platform. Other social media networks, such as Twitter, Instagram, and Snapchat, have sprung up in response to Facebook's success. A social media platform is an online platform that users use to develop social networks or relationships with others that share similar personal or professional interests, hobbies, backgrounds, or real-life connections. We can have timely, interactive interactions through social media (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Hanna et al., 2011).

According to Victoria Rideout, time spent on social media, which she refers to as "entertainment media" is "two times the average amount of time spent annually in school" among the youngsters. She goes on to say that in a day, an average American youngster utilizes seven and a half hours entertaining themselves on the media and that they multi-task between all of the different media they utilize. They could be listening to music, writing a tweet, or updating their Facebook status; because social media is availability is unlimited, unlike school or a full-time job, the amount of time one may spend on the internet has "exploded" over the years (Rideout, 2012).

Individuals now have unrestricted free access to any type of information to meet their demands, thanks to the introduction of social media. When a social media platform's use is hampered in any way, it restricts people's access to information and places a limit on what they may use to meet their needs. On the use and gratification theory, this is a metaphor for obstruction (Eyrich et al., 2008; Shensa et al., 2017; Widhiasthini, 2020).

One of the theories of communications that focuses on social communications is the "Uses and Gratification Theory" or "need seeking." This theory applies a functionalistic perspective to communications and media, claiming that the most essential job of media is to satisfy the audience's needs and motives. As a result, the greater the satisfaction obtained when these demands are filled (Windahl et al., 2008). Two basic questions underpin the notion of uses and gratification:

- 1) What is it that draws people to certain forms of media?
- 2) How do the media give people satisfaction?

On Friday, June 11th, 2021, the Nigerian government banned Twitter for violating its "abusive behaviour" regulations by deleting a tweet from Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari: "Many of those misbehaving today are too young to be aware of the destruction and loss of lives that occurred during the Nigerian Civil War," Buhari wrote in the now-deleted tweet. Those "who went through the war, will treat them in the language they understand." Buhari's Twitter account was suspended for 12 hours, and he was told to erase the tweet. Following the government's restriction of Twitter access, Nigerian Attorney-General Abubakar Malami instructed the Ministry of Justice to pursue anybody who disobeyed the ban. The tweet likened the deadly Nigerian Civil War of the 1960s to a spate of attacks on government offices in the country's southeast by Nigerian secessionist parties (Huff-Rousselle, 1995). The Nigerian Government felt disrespected and ignored by twitter's action in attempting to uphold their culture of fairness and justice by removing a tweet that violated their laws, and thus imposed a ban on the social media platform without considering its citizens and how Twitter helps them meet their needs. This has resulted in a stalemate between the Nigerian government and its population, the Nigerian government and Twitter, and the Nigerian government and other governments. The Nigerian government's dramatic action has resulted in Nigerians using Twitter with VPN to meet their needs which is currently illegal in the country. The goal of this research is to examine how the Twitter ban impedes the uses and gratification theory.

The problem

The media's effects on humans are discussed in the Uses and Gratification theory (Ray et al., 2019; Smock et al., 2011; Palos-Sanchez et al., 2021). It describes how people utilize the media to meet their wants and how they feel content when those needs are met. The prohibition on Twitter in Nigeria, on the other hand, creates a barrier to the theory's eventual outcome, implying that as long as Twitter is banned in Nigeria, Nigerians' demands will go unmet. There is no research on the prohibition on Twitter in Nigeria because it is a recent occurrence. As a result, the goal of this study is to evaluate if Nigeria's ban on Twitter is an obstruction to the uses and gratification theory.

Research objectives

An examination of the Twitter ban in Nigeria as an impediment to uses and gratification is the overall objective. The specific objectives are to:

- Ascertain what draws Nigerians to Twitter
- Examine how Twitter gives Nigerians satisfaction
- Determine whether the Twitter ban is an obstruction to Nigerians' need for gratification

Review of related literature

Social media and its uses

Social media is a platform that allows people all over the world to talk about their problems and thoughts. The word "social media" refers to the interaction between groups or individuals who utilize the internet and virtual communities to create, share, and occasionally exchange ideas, photographs, videos, and other media. Social networks have a tremendous influence on young people. It's becoming evident that social media has become an integral component of many people's life. Many teenagers monitor Twitter updates from their friends and family on their laptops, tablet computers, and smartphones.

Social networking platforms can help young individuals improve their social skills. Social media is a type of web-based data transmission. Individually, social media allows us to communicate with friends and family, learn new things, pursue our passions, and be entertained. On a professional level, we can use social media to grow or widen our expertise in a specific subject and to improve our professional network by connecting with other industry

professionals. At the company level, social media helps us interact with our audience, collect feedback from customers, and enhance our brand.

Uses and gratification theory on social media

Uses and Gratification theory is based on classical mass communication research on how people seek out and pick certain media to meet their requirements (Katz et al., 1974; Weiss, 1976). Blumber & Kats (1974), are considered the founders of the uses and gratification theory, and their works are regarded as a progression in mass communication research. People require communication to meet their wants, which are based on social and psychological moods and conditions, according to the theory. In other words, their communication style is influenced by their demands (Rubin & Rubin, 1992).

The audience is active in this situation, as opposed to the Magic Bullet idea, which claims that the audience is passive. The user/audience is at the heart of this philosophy. Even for interpersonal communication, people turn to the media for ideas on what to talk about. They obtain additional knowledge and exposure to the world outside of their limited gaze; by referring the media to others. People have a variety of requirements and sources of gratification. They are divided into five categories:

- Cognitive Needs
- Social Integrative Needs
- Affective Needs
- Tension-Free Needs
- Personal Integrative Needs

Cognitive needs

People utilize media to gain knowledge, information, and facts, among other things. Some members of the audience are hungry for intellectual and academic knowledge. This is not a common occurrence. Different people have various requirements. Quiz shows on television, for example, focus on factual knowledge; to keep up with current events, people should watch the news regularly; and search engines on the internet are also very popular because they allow people to search for any topic quickly and without regard for time constraints.

Social integrative needs

It refers to the necessity to interact with family, friends, and other members of society. People appear not to socialize on weekends anymore, instead of using social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, etc. to meet their demands.

Affective needs

It encompasses a wide range of human emotions, pleasures, and moods. People utilize media to meet their emotional requirements, such as Twitter. The finest illustration would be when people become emotional, agitated, and even cry while viewing tragic moments of the Nigerian End Sars protest.

Tension-Free Needs

People utilize the media as a form of escapism from the actual world and a means of easing anxiety and stress. For instance, individuals find it relaxing to watch television, listen to the radio, or surf the internet. In reality, media can capture an audience's attention because of the emotional connection between them, the circumstance, and the characters. Being that each person's demands are unique, how the media meets those requirements is subjective. For example, some people may find it relaxing to watch the news, while others may find it tensing or agitating. Although the media is the same, people use it for a variety of reasons.

Personal integrative needs

This is the requirement for self-confidence. People utilize the media to boost their self-esteem, establish credibility, and maintain stability. As a result, people partake in social media challenges to reassure themselves of their social

standing. Individuals also watch advertisements on the media for jewelry, furniture, and apparel, and then purchase these items to change their lifestyle (Communication Theory, 2016). Given related literature, it is seen that the uses and gratification theory is intertwined with social media usage; this implies that the Twitter Ban in Nigeria is truly an impediment to the uses and gratification theory (Getchell & Sellnow, 2016; Balakrishnan et al., 2019; Balakrishnan et al., 2020). It can be deduced that Nigerians are dissatisfied due to their needs unmet as a result of an embargo on the source of their needs.

The theoretical underpinning of uses and gratification theory and Twitter Ban in Nigeria

Blumler & Katz's (1974) as cited in Egede & Nwosu (2013), uses and gratification theory suggests that media users play an active role in choosing and using the media. Users take an active part in the communication process and are goal-oriented in their media use. The theorist says that a media user seeks out a media source that best fulfills the needs of the user. Uses and gratifications assume that the user has alternate choices to satisfy their need. Uses and gratifications theory takes a more humanistic approach to look at media use. Blumler and Katz as further cited in Wimmer & Dominick (2010), believed that there is not merely one way that the populace uses media. Instead, they believe there are as many reasons for using the media, as there are media users. According to the theory, media consumers have free will to decide how they will use the media and how it will affect them. Blumler and Katz's values are seen by the fact that they believe that media consumers can choose the influence media has on them as well as the idea that users choose media alternatives merely as a means to an end. Uses and gratification is the optimist's view of the media. The theory takes out the possibility that the media can have an unconscious influence over our lives and how we view the world. The idea that we simply use the media to satisfy a given need does not seem to fully recognize the power of the media in today's society (Graffin, 2006; Ruggiero, 2000).

Methodology

For data presentation, descriptive analysis was used, which involves using a descriptive statistical tool to offer an analysis of respondents' profiles with percentage weighting. Descriptive statistics were used to assess all valid responses. The online survey monkey was the instrument of data collection because the variables of the research are online-based and its respondents are members of the social media community who reside in Nigeria.

Data Presentation and Discussions

By the data analysis conducted in this chapter and the review of related literature in chapter two, the discussion of findings of this research is presented below:

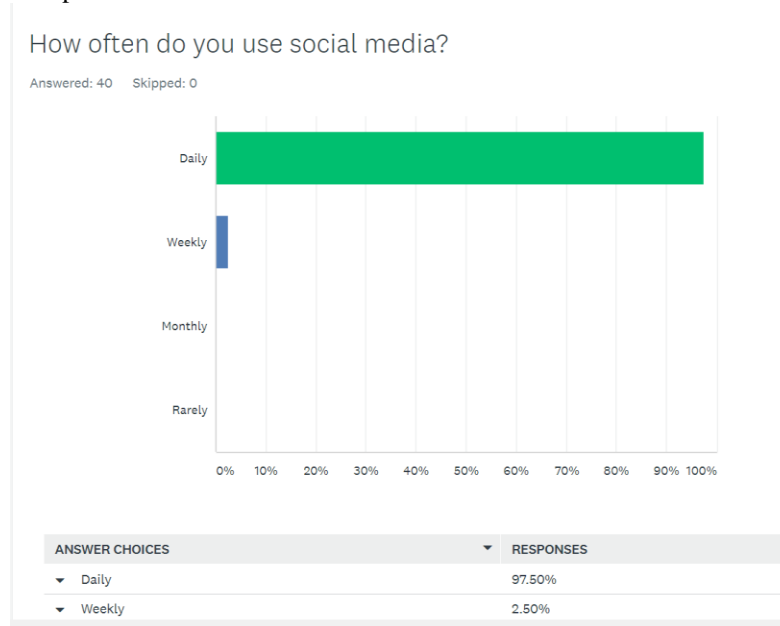


Figure 1. Active use of social media in Nigeria

The above explicitly shows that Nigerians are active social media users with devices that have online access 24/7.

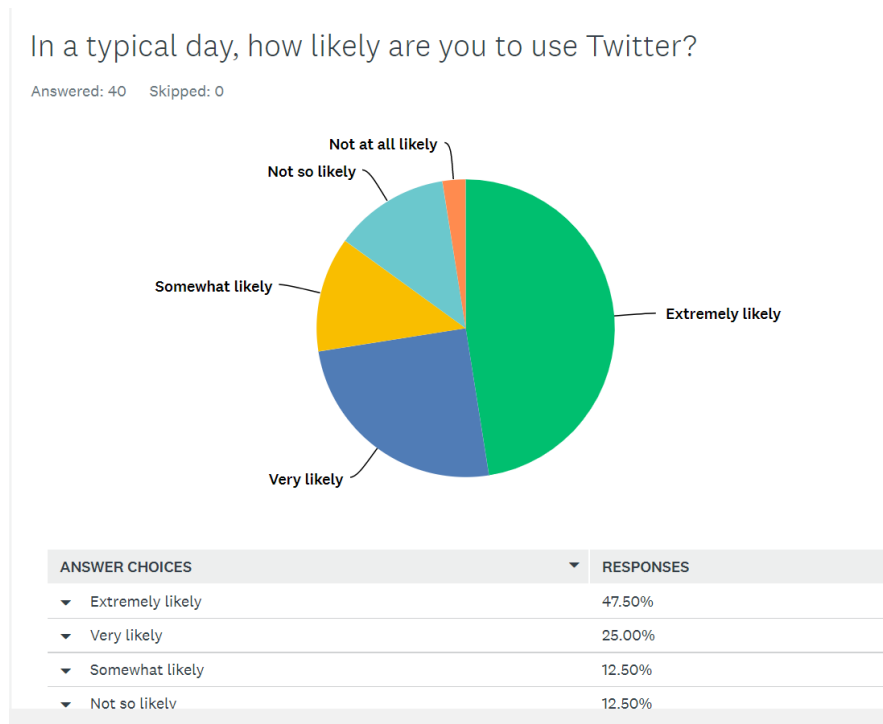
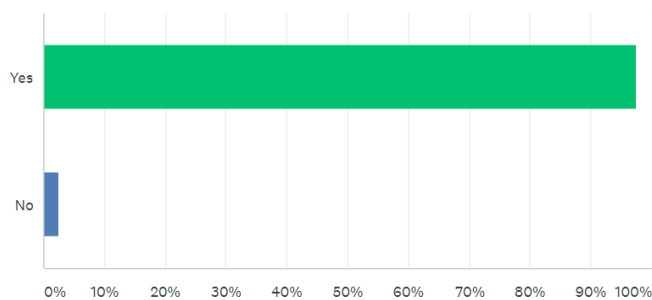


Figure 2. Twitter usage in Nigeria

Although there are other social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, etc. majority of Nigerians hardly go a day without operating their Twitter accounts. This indicates that Twitter is a means to an end for Nigerians.

Would you say Twitter satisfies the need you are using it for?

Answered: 40 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Yes	97.50%
No	2.50%
TOTAL	

Figure 3. Will the use of Twitter meet your needs

While we have Nigerians who use the Twitter platform with no forms of expectations, these people are not significant in number compared to those who use the platform with expectations. The expectations in this context are the needs of Nigerian social media users. Twitter has needs it satisfies for its users which is in agreement with the uses and gratification theory.

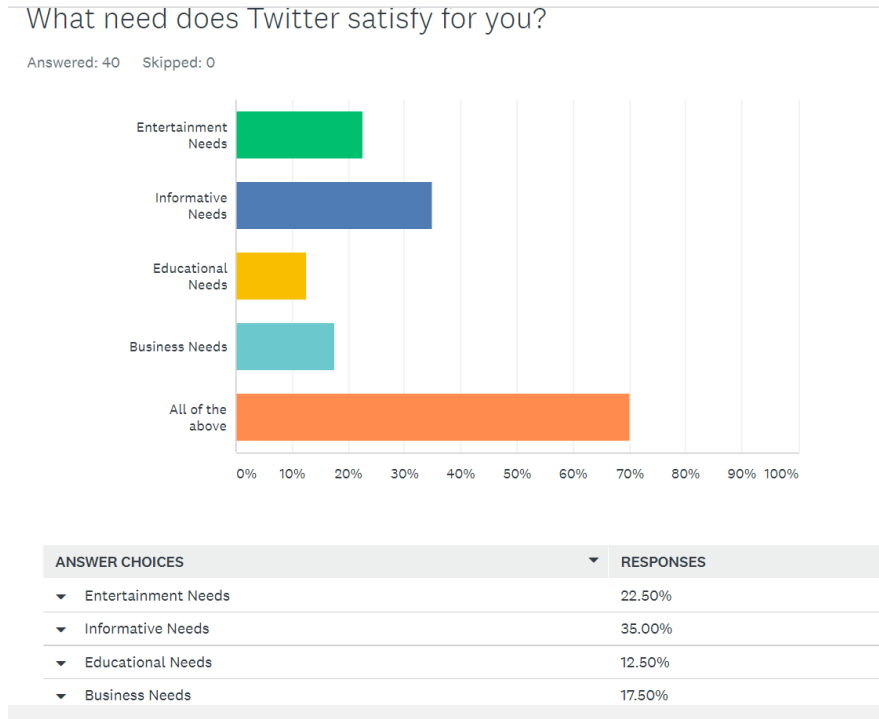


Figure 4. The needs of Nigerian social media users

Motivation is the crucial driver of many actions. Nigerians agreed that their motivations for the use of Twitter are embedded in all the listed needs above. While some said it is the source of real-time information, others opined it is the ability to monetize the platform, and the majority selected the Twitter trends as their motivation factor for utilizing the Twitter platform. The above table is in sync with their motivation factors.

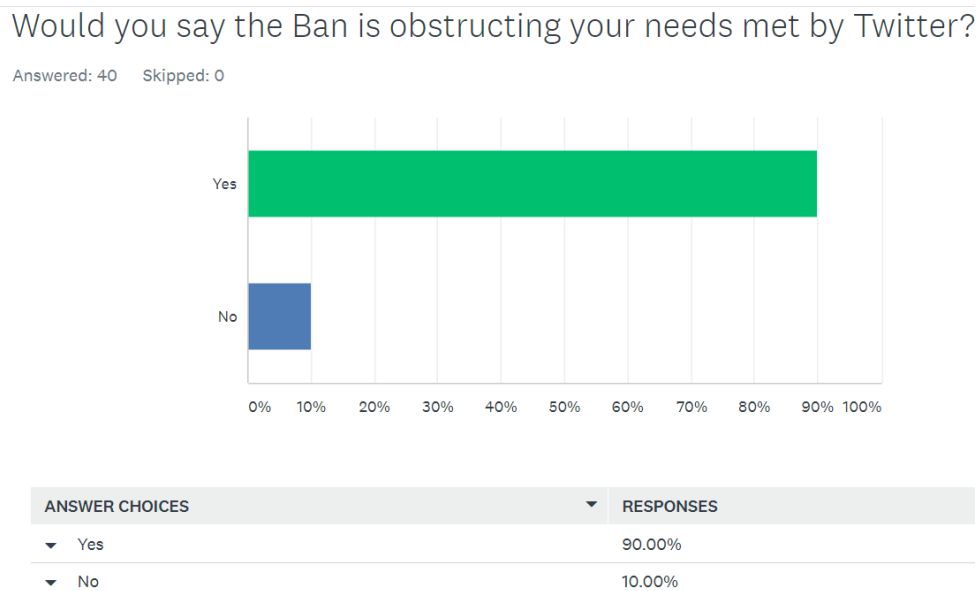
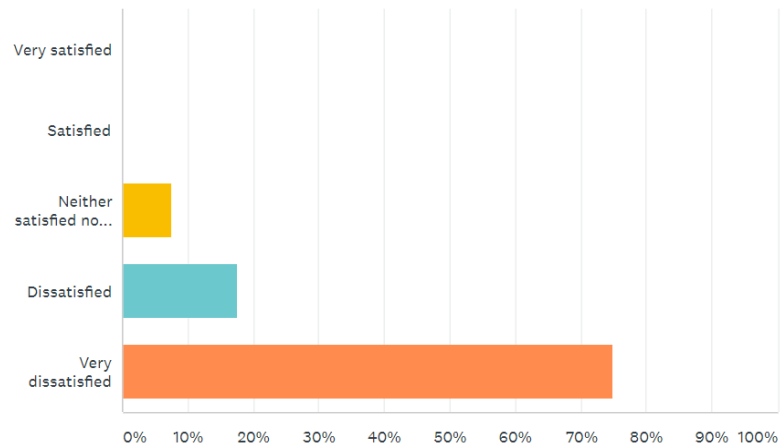


Figure 5. Would you say the Ban is obstructing your needs met by Twitter

Given that every individual has the fundamental human right to freedom of information and expression, the ban of Twitter in Nigeria is a limitation to the right of expression and information. As evident above, Nigerians depend largely on Twitter to gratify their everyday needs; but with this new law, there is a gap in the need gratification of Nigerians.

What is your reaction towards the Ban?

Answered: 40 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Very satisfied	0.00%
Satisfied	0.00%
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	7.50%

Figure 6. What is your reaction towards the Ban?

Having your fundamental human right forcefully restricted is like been locked up in a dark room with no form of light. Nigerians are very unhappy and highly dissatisfied with the forceful ban of Twitter by the Nigerian Government. The action of the government is perceived as oppressive and bullying by both the Twitter committee and Nigerians.

Summary of discussions

Based on the analysis and interpretation of the data collected for this research, the findings are summarized as follows:

The findings of this study indicate that the Twitter ban in Nigeria is truly an impediment to the uses and gratification theory. With the ban on Twitter, Nigerians cannot turn to Twitter to gratify their needs. This is in agreement with the reviewed literature that says “The user/audience is at the heart of this philosophy. Even for interpersonal communication, people turn to the media for ideas on what to talk about”. It was observed that Twitter meets the needs of Nigerians through the various offerings of the platform. With the ability to monetize Twitter now, it is a source of livelihood for the majority of Nigerians; it is also a source of entertainment through the use of Twitter trends thereby keeping Nigerians up-to-date on the latest happenings in society.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, the following conclusions emerged:

The Nigerian government should consider uplifting the Twitter ban in Nigeria as it is perceived to be an infringement on the fundamental human rights of Nigerians. In this regard, the President's Twitter ban in Nigeria is a real

impediment to the uses and gratification theory, which is rubbing off on Nigerians as their needs appear to be unmet as a result of the ban.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusion, the study recommends as follows:

- Twitter is a social media platform designed for the public to freely express themselves while staying connected; it is therefore recommended that the Nigerian government should not overlook the actual purpose of the platform in a bid to create an impression.
- Rules and regulations are established to maintain law and order; the Nigerian government should adhere to the rules governing Twitter to avoid taking down any posts that violate the Twitter community rules.

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