

EVALUATION OF INTERNET MEDIA AS STRATEGIES FOR CHECKMATING CORRUPTION IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Corruption has been a major factor for under-development of some developing countries, Nigeria inclusive. The study was a critical evaluation of the internet media as tools for checkmating corruption in Nigeria. It sought to determine the correlation between the use of internet media by anti-graft agencies to win the war against corruption in Nigeria; and to evaluate the extent the use of social media networks by anti-graft agencies could help win the war against corruption and enhance economic growth in Nigeria. Three major cities in the federation, Lagos from the Western part, Abuja from the Northern part and Calabar from the Southern part were selected for the study. The justification for the choice is because the three states had anchored the administrative headquarters (Capital) of Nigeria at different times before and after independence, and thus harbour people from all ethnic divides in the country as residents. Opinion survey design was used. Data sourced were statistically analyzed. Results indicate that the use of internet media by anti-graft agencies did not have significant effect on winning the war against corruption in Nigeria. Also, that social media networks did not significantly affect the winning of the war against corruption in Nigeria and consequently its level of economic development. It is was then recommended that internet media tools should be effectively harnessed as resources for checkmating corruption in Nigeria, for enhanced economic development.

Keywords: Anti-Graft War, Internet Media, Social Media Networks, Economic Development.

Introduction

Corruption as a concept has a myriad of dimensions such as embezzlement, bribery, non-accountability, arson, sabotage, misappropriation of public funds, electoral frauds and extortion just to mention but a few. Corruption is a major cause undermining the growth and development of many countries in the world (Ranga.nr, 2017). The prioritization of educational certificates over skill acquisition, technology and agricultural development has also worsened this problem (Aderibigbe, 2017). Despite the rapid economic growth in some advanced economies, corruption still play a negative role in the growth and development of the global economy, generally, due to the consequent decline in fortunes of the developing economies. Countries afflicted with high level of corruption and misuse of power, dishonest or unfair business practices are not capable of experiencing growth compared with those on low levels of corruption (Mirzayev, 2018). The degree of corruption varies from country to country depending on the administrative structures and resources availability (Transparency

International, 2012). No economically viable nation can survive having its structures built on corruption.

In Nigeria, corruption has become a phenomenon, and has been cited as one of the greatest forms of human rights violation. Nigeria ranked 148 out of 180 countries assessed in 2017 on the annual Corruption Perception Index, CPI, by Transparency International. This scourge is manifest in various socio-political spheres in Nigeria, especially in government circles (Olowolagba, 2017; Abati, 2017; Olawoyin, 2018; Okolo, 2015; Onyiorah, 2014). More so, the discovery of oil and gas among other mineral resources in Nigeria, paved the way for the abandonment of agriculture and the high incidence of corruption as scramble for oil wealth continues. Several programs like the Structural Adjustment Program, Operation Feed the Nation, and War Against Indiscipline were established amidst other laws to checkmate corrupt practices, but could not achieve the expected goals due to lack of continuity in governance (Campos, Lien, & Pradhan, 1999).

In Nigeria, corruption has not just destroyed the economic growth and development but, has destroyed the good image of Nigeria globally (Nnabuko, Nwaizugbo & Odigbo, 2012). Some of the negative impacts of corruption in Nigeria include recession, inflation, unemployment, retrenchment of staff, strike, untimely payment of salaries and pensions, terrorism, militancy, rise in regional agitations for secession, lack of social amenities, inequality in resource allocations, and many more, (Aderibigbe, 2017). This shows that, the anti-graft war in Nigeria requires effective and sustained checkmating strategies to surmount corrupt practices in Nigeria. It is on this basis, that this study is poised to evaluate the effect of internet media and social media networks as tools for for checkmating corruption in Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

Nigeria, the Africa's biggest economy, though described as the giant of Africa with the fastest economic growth rates averaging 7.4% has the highest number of poor people (Opejobi, 2016). According to World Bank report on Nigeria Economy July 2014, poverty in Nigeria is pegged at 33.1% with population of over 192 million people. This implies that, an average Nigerian lives below \$1dollar a day in a country with the largest natural and human resources in Africa and the 6th largest exporter of crude in the world (Wilson & Stammmer, 2015). In 2015, Nigeria experienced a rapid decline in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) which affect it growth and development in almost all sectors of the economies factored by high rate of corruption and the inability of the government to eradicate it (Onuba, 2016). Even when some of the eminent Nigerians, especially politicians and top government appointees who had in different occasions been found culpable of corruption by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) for embezzlement of public funds were not prosecuted rather, same set of people were still re-appointed by the same government that found them guilty.

A new hope seemed to have shine on the people of Nigeria amidst the emergence of President Muhammed Buhari in 2015 after the general election believing that, his campaign promises of "no tolerance to corruption" would be effective but, however, today the whole situation still look rather unexpectedly negative. Thus, the promptings for this study which is another quest for answers to corruption in the country, a cankerworm that is stifling the nation's development, through the internet media.

Objectives of the Study

The broad objective sought was to evaluate the extent internet media could serve as an instrument for checkmating corruption in Nigeria. The specific objectives were:

- i. To determine the correlation between use of internet media by anti-graft agencies as tool for winning the war against corruption in Nigeria.
- ii. To ascertain the relationship between social media networks as tool for winning the war against corruption and improving the level of economic growth in Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following research questions were formulated to help find the answers:

- i. What is the correlation between use of internet media by anti-graft agencies as tool and the winning of the war against corruption in Nigeria?
- ii. To what extent could social media networks be used as tool for winning the war against corruption and improving the level of economic development in Nigeria?

Research Hypotheses

The following null-hypotheses were tested in the study:

- i. There is no significant correlation between use of internet media by anti-graft agencies as and the winning of war against corruption in Nigeria.
- ii. Social media network has no significant relationship as tool for winning the war against corruption and improving the level of economic development in Nigeria.

Literature Review

This study critically assessed the work of other scholars and relevant sources of information on corruption, the concept of corruption, strategies of checkmating corruption, as well as the role of internet media in curbing the menace of corrupt practices in Nigeria.

Theoretical Frame work

The theoretical framework for this study hinges on the technological acceptance model. The technology acceptance model (TAM) is an information systems theory that models how users come to accept and use a technology.

According to Davis, Bagozzi & Warshaw (1989), the TAM theory holds that certain factors influence users' decision on the usage when presented with a new technology. These are:

Perceived usefulness (PU) – This was defined by Fred Davis as "the degree to which a person believes that using a particular system would enhance his or her job performance". The government of Nigeria should be able study the impact of the application of social media tool which stands as a vital media technology for curbing corrupt activities in the system, since all other strategies have failed.

Perceived ease-of-use (PEOU) – Davis defined this as "the degree to which a person believes that using a particular system would be free from effort" (Davis 1989). This model identifies a set of communication strategies that institutions involved in technological acceptance work could make use of in checkmating deviants especially corruption related cases such as, Facebook, twitter, Instagram, whatsApp, LinkedIn, Palm chat and Youtube.

The Concept of Corruption

The word "Corrupt" means "evil deed". According to Mariam-Webster Dictionary, it's an immoral act. To be corrupt, is to go against the moral ethics or standard, to be dishonest or unfair to an extent that might be harmful to the system or practice. By definition, Corruption is an illicit or unethical conduct, distrust or deceptive act carried out by an individual entrusted with a task or position of authority for selfish interest or motive. Corruption is characterized by activities such as Embezzlement, misappropriation, bribery, extortion, inequality in resource allocation, suppression, injustice, marginalization etc. Corruption is mostly noticed with government officials who occupy strategic positions in government.

Heads of departments in government sectors like those in ministries who are signatory to the various accounts in most cases divert public funds into their personal accounts.

Morris (2011), opined that corruption is the illegitimate use of public power to benefit a private interest. On the other hand, Kaufmann (2012), said from the World Bank perspectives, corruption also extends 'legal corruption' in which power is abused within the confines of the law - as those with power often have the ability to make laws for their protection.

Corruption and Nigeria

Corruption in Nigeria is credited to the poor administrative structures and lack of unbiased political will to tackle the problem. Hence, government officials entrusted with public funds do easily divert such money into their personal accounts, and many do get away from it. A few years ago, a former Speaker of the House of Representatives, name withheld, was interrogated by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) over an allegation of N10 billion illegally borrowed from banks and possibly squandered (Vanguard Newspaper, May 27, 2011). Many former chief executives of various States in Nigeria have also been arrested, and quizzed by the EFCC, while a few have been jailed over corruption charges or mismanagement of public funds (Premiumtimesng, 2017; BBC, 7 Oct., 2011; Guardian.ng, 17 May, 2021; Saharareporters, 16 Apr., 2021).

In the banking sector, many dethroned chief executives have also fallen under the harmer of the EFCC or other anti-graft agencies in the country. They include a former female Managing Director of Oceanic Bank who was jailed for embezzling billions of naira worth of citizens' funds kept under her control (BBC, 9 Oct., 2010, Vanguard News, 9 Oct, 2010). The bank collapsed a few years after, with billions of depositors' funds. Again, a former Managing Director of Bank PHB was arraigned by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) of stealing the bank's N11 billion (Premiumtimesng, 16 June, 2021). Still in the financial sector, a former female chief executive of the Nigerian Stock Exchange, was ignobly sacked from office over corruption charges and dubious manipulations of public shares (Proshareng.com, 2011; Vanguard News, 9 July, 2011). At the government, a former Chairman/Chief Executive Officer of the Federal Capital Territory, was also arraigned by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), including the former Director-General of the Abuja Development Authority over allegations of corruptly enriching themselves, (THISDAY, 2011).

In spite of these, people allege that the EFFC sometimes is used by the government, as a willing tool for the witch-hunting of political opponents. Hence, that the corruption fight has turned to a selective fight, for whipping political opponents into shape. Thus, a former Chairman of a ruling political party joyfully announced to political opponents, that sins of any corrupt politician that joins his party will be forgiven, which implies that only those who failed to join his party will be hunted down by anti-graft agencies in Nigerian. Thus, the anti-graft war in Nigeria, has also become a tool for recruiting perceived corrupt governors and other politicians into favoured political parties.

Methodology

Opinion survey design was employed for sourcing data with structured questionnaire. For the area of study, three (3) states considered as the administrative headquarters of the country were selected in line with the three regional structures of the country. These are: Cross River State in the South-South Region, Lagos state in the western region and Abuja in the northern region. Another justification for their selection was for ease of research to the target population, since the selected states have been states capital of the country in different times with Abuja the present Federal Capital territory. The population of the study encompassed

people in leadership position, especially those considered to be responsible for the management of public funds, decision makers, opinion leaders and even the governed, giving an estimated population of 145,000 mathematically deducted from Nigeria's current international accepted population of 192million (United Nations Estimate, October 3, 2017) people. A sample size of 399 was determined at 5% margin of error and 95% level of confidence via Taro Yamane formula for finite population. Systematic random sampling technique was used in administering this. The main instrument for data collection was structured questionnaire. Data were statistically analyzed using chi-square (X^2) tools.

Results

Respondents' Demographic profile

The data generated gathered from the field shows that 62.8% of the respondents were male, while 37.2% were female; 30.45% were in the age bracket of 18 to 35 years, 40.55% were in the age range of 35 to 50 years: 19.2% in the age group of 50 to 60 years, while the remaining 9.8% were 60 years and above. 45.5% were a cross section of selected masses (electorates), 14.5% were civil servants, and 25.05% were politicians, while 14.05% were foreign observers.

Table 1: The correlation between Social Media Corruption fight and economic growth in the country

Options	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	185	41.11%
Agree	146	32.44%
Undecided	24	5.33%
Disagree	21	4.66%
Strongly Disagree	74	16.44%
Total	450	100%

Data displayed on table 1 shows that 41.11% of the respondents strongly agreed that there is strong relationship between social media fight and economic growth in the country. 32.44% of the respondents equally agreed with that; 5.33% were undecided; 4.66% disagreed, while 16.44% strongly disagreed with the point.

Table 2: On whether the internet media has impact in checkmating corruption in Nigeria.

Options	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	155	34.44%
Agree	178	39.55%
Undecided	32	7.11%
Disagree	37	8.22%
Strongly Disagree	48	10.66%
Total	450	100%

Data displayed on table 2 shows that 34.44% of the respondents strongly agreed that internet media has a relative impact in checkmating corruption in Nigeria. 39.55% of the respondents

equally agreed with that; 7.11% were undecided; 8.22% disagreed, while 10.66% strongly disagreed with the point.

Table 3: on whether internet media tools would efficiently serve as strategy for checkmating corrupt activities in Nigeria

Options	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	190	42.22%
Agree	165	36.66%
Undecided	24	5.33%
Disagree	20	4.44%
Strongly Disagree	51	11.33%
Total	450	100%

Data displayed on table 3 shows that 2.22% of the respondents strongly agreed that internet media tools would effectively checkmate corruption in Nigeria.

Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis One

Ho: There's no significant correlation between Social Media Corruption fight and economic growth in the country.

Test Statistics= Spearman Correlation Coefficient (r^s) =

$$R^s = 1 - \frac{6 \sum d^2}{n(n^2 - 1)}$$

Table 4: Statistical Test of Hypothesis 1

Options	Data1	Data2	Rank1	Rank2	d	d ²
Strongly Agree	185	190	5	5	0	0
Agree	146	165	6	6	0	0
Undecided	24	24	1	3	-2	4
Disagree	21	20	1	3	1	1
Strongly Disagree	74	51	3	2	1	1

Adopted from tables 1 and 3

$$\sum d^2 = 0+0+4+1+1=6$$

$$\text{So } r^s = \frac{1 - (6 \times 6)}{n(n^2 - 1)}$$

$$r^s = \frac{1 - 6 \times 6}{5(5 \times 5 - 1)}$$

$$R^s = 0.70$$

Decision

Since the result of the Correlation Coefficient (r^s) =0.70 indicating significant strong correlation, we hereby reject H_0 and accept H_1 which says that “there is significant correlation between the negative comments Social Media Corruption fight and economic growth in the country.

Hypothesis Two

H_0 : The internet media has impact in checkmating corruption in Nigeria.

Test Statistics = Chi-Square (X^2)

$$X^2 = \frac{\sum O - E}{E}$$

Expected frequency = $\frac{\sum \text{Observed frequency}}{\text{Number of Observations}}$

$$= \frac{190+165+24+20+51}{5} = 90$$

Degree of Freedom = 5.

Hence, Critical Chi-Square at 5% Margin of Error =9.34

$$X^2 = \frac{(190-90)^2}{90} + \frac{(165-90)^2}{90} + \frac{(24-90)^2}{90} + \frac{(20-90)^2}{90} + \frac{(51-90)^2}{90}$$

$$= 111.11 + 65.5 + 48.4 + 54.44 + 16.9$$

$$= 296.35$$

Decision

Since the calculated chi-square (X^2 calculated =296.35, $p < 0.05$) is greater than the critical chi-square (9.34), we hereby reject the H_0 and accept the H_1 which says that: “the internet media has significant impact in checkmating corruption in Nigeria”.

11. Summary of Findings

A summary of the findings obtained in this study show that:

- i. There is significant correlation between internet media and social media networks as tools for winning the corruption fight in Nigeria.
- ii. Social media networks are significantly effective as tools for winning the war against corruption in Nigeria.
- iii. The internet media and social media networks are popular communication media amongst Nigerians, hence, their importance for the anti-graft war in the country.

Conclusion

For the Nigerian government to win the war against corruption, and restore growth in its fiscal sector, monetary sector, cut wasteful spending, restore public institutions to their past glories, repair and build new infrastructures, strengthen the institutions, including the law enforcement and anti-corruption agencies, and ensure accountability in its tax management system, internet media tools and social media networks which are popular amongst Nigerians must be integrated in the anti-graft strategies. This will serve as a panacea for eliminating corruption and enhancing the socio-economic and political development of the country.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proffered:

- i. Internet tools should be efficiently handled and managed preferably by resource experts to checkmate corrupt activities in Nigeria.
- ii. Internet media facilities and equipment should be made available at affordable rates preferably to all the urban areas where a chunk of the population live.
- iii. Nigerian government should set up programs that will educate the general public on the importance of internet media especially in information dissemination in-lieu of corrupt activities.
- iv. Information and telecommunication courses should be included in the primary and post primary education curriculum.
- v. Social media networks should not be banned in the country, but should rather be harnessed by the government as tool for checkmating internet frauds, “yahoo-yahoo,” and many more.

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