PERSPECTIVES OF ACTIVISTS ON SOCIAL MEDIA USE DURING 2012 AND 2014 SOCIAL PROTESTS IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This paper studied the perceived influence of social media on protests' coordination, organisation and mobilisation in Nigeria using two popular social protests that took place in 2012 and 2014. These are the #OccupyNigeria and #BringBackOurGirls Protests. The aim is to establish the influence of hashtags in the organisation and coordination of the #OccupyNigeria and #BringBackOurGirls social protests that took place in 2012 and 2014. The paper explored the technological determinism theory as theoretical framework. An in-depth interview was conducted with 6 key organisers of the protests, one in Kano, who helped organise the protests, two in Abuja, one was part of those who organise #OccupyNigeria and the other #BringBackOurGirls. Another organiser of the #OccupyNigeria in Lagos and one in the United States of America who coordinated #BringBackOurGirls in the US. The idea is to get insights into how the two protests were organised from the people who were at the centre of the organisation. Findings of the study showed that both #BringBackOurGirls and #OccupyNigeria use social media in the organisation, mobilisation and coordination during the protests. They specifically use social media for mobilisation and creation of awareness on the two protests. They both used social media to inspire global support and outcry. Also, social media provided a platform where people who never made it to any street protests had their voices to join in demanding for the rescue of the Chibok girls. The findings of the paper also show that classification of activists into "slacktivism" and "activism" based on mode is disservice to people who have decided to lend their voices, time and resources to noble causes across the world. The paper concludes that both #BringBackOurGirls and #OccupyNigeria were street protests which some scholars refer to as "real activism", however, the two protests used social media specifically to mobilise people to join the protests and galvanise support from Nigerians and at the same time attract global support.

Keywords: coordination, mobilisation, online/offline, protests, social media

Introduction

Since early this century, protests movements have been producing new ways and strategies to synchronise the behaviour of groups for a collective action "quickly, cheaply and publicly" (Gladwell & Shirky, 2011, p.154). This was something made possible with development in new Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs). The development of technology and increased access to the Internet gave rise to the introduction of social media, particularly the most popular among them like Facebook, X, and YouTube.

The coming of social media introduced a new phase into how humans communicate. Social media are revolutionising communication, facilitating dialogue, communal spirit, and interconnectedness, while simultaneously promoting the allure of textual and audio-visual

features among users who engage in online activities (Abubakar, 2011). Several studies have ascertained the correlation between social media platforms and collaborative endeavours (Margetts, John, Hale & Yasseri, 2016; Chan & Holosko, 2016; Mshelia, 2018). The platforms are creating new outlets for resistance, which has changed how activists protest and the way they organise their causes. This phenomenon has been observed in recent years, such as the Occupy movements, Black Lives Matter movements in the United States, the Iranian Twitter (X) Revolution, and the Popular Arab Spring in 2011. In these protests, individuals are coming together to identify issues of concern, highlighting matters of importance to their lives, like prohibitive cost of living, electoral malpractices and lifetime dictators, and rally individuals on/offline to tackle these concerns. Most of these are done with the help of social media tools.

In Nigeria, as in other places around the world, the use of media as vehicle for mobilizing protests seen as anti-people is not new. However, the coming of social media, has helped in amplifying what the traditional media used to do. The traditional media served as collaborators in nationalists' struggles and helped in several moves to transform the Nigeria's socio-political environment. They contributed in the struggles for democracy. Therefore, the use of media for protests is not new. According to Phipps and Szagla, (2007), the media in Nigeria helped social movements to gain broader support through framing. Therefore, the coming of social media has not only increased the mobilisation functions of the traditional media but make coordination and organisation of protests easier. While protest movements in Nigeria are still using traditional mass media in the organisation and mobilization for protests and they are seen as part of the social struggle and change since the independence struggle from the British (Falola, 2018), the coming of social media has broken the monopoly of traditional media as the only source for mobilisation.

Social media introduced new dimension to how social movements and activists in Nigeria conceive, organise and communicate protest information. The tools came with some perceived influence over protest's organisation by both activists, researchers and social media influencers. They are seen as wielding influence on how protests are conceived, organised and communicated. This attracted cross disciplinary studies (Osman, Emre Gökhan, Brooke, & Yücel, 2014; Bonilla & Rosa, 2015; Chua, 2018; Alfonzo, 2021) to examine their place in this on one hand and activism and protests on the other or social media activism and protests as a whole. Social media's ability to reach and engage a large global audience is recognized as a significant and valuable resource for promoting collective action and facilitating social transformation. (El-Tantawy & Wiest, 2011).

Statement of the Problem
The advent of social media and micro-blogging tools like Twitter (X) has introduced new dimension to how social movements and activists conceive, coordinate and communicate protest information (Olson, 2016). The perceived influence of these tools in the organisation of protests has attracted media scholars (Letcher, 2018; Wei, 2019; Marandici, 2022) to start looking at the relationship between social media and collective action. The protests that occurred in Moldova and Iran in 2009, the G20-summit protests in London and Toronto in 2009 and 2010, the Occupy Movements across the globe, the Spain indignados, and the Arab Spring of 2011 have all sparked a discourse regarding the influence of social media in social and political protests. These online platforms serve as tools that empower individuals by providing them with a platform and means for communication and the dissemination of protest-related information (Zamir, 2014).

These wave of online protests or what is referred to as hashtag activism, has facilitated ways in which activists communicate and protest. Social and political protests, which were earlier on conducted on streets, are now evolving and taking place on the Web (Mosca, 2010), or the combination of online and offline. Around the world, protests are organised and carried out via the Internet (Feixa, Fereira & Juris, 2009).

Recent events in Nigeria show protest organisers are utilising social media in organising protests online and offline. However, a lot of speculations are ongoing about their perceived influence over protest's organisation and coordination. To understand the perceived influence of these tools on protests, this paper studied two hashtags protests #BringBackOurGirls and #OccupyNigeria to understand the connection between social media's influence on protests organisation and

coordination in Nigeria, focusing on how the coming of social media widened the public space for citizen participation in social protests.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of this paper is to look at the perceived influence of social media on protests organisation and coordination in Nigeria by specifically establishing the role they played in the organisation and coordination of #OccupyNigeria and #BringBackOurGirls social protests that took place in 2012 and 2014.

Research Question

The paper therefore raised this question to be answered:

1.   What is the the perceived influence of social media on the organisation of the #OccupyNigeria and #BringBackOurGirls social protests.

Literature Review

Throughout history, societies are organised into units, each interacting with the other, first through interpersonal relationship, communication, marriages and other social interactions. They are organised into family units and small communities. Today, modern communication technology has altered and transforms most of these. From face to face interaction, changes in technology has brought mass media that facilitate one to many communications with a delayed feedback. Today, it is possible to, not only send messages instantly and get immediate feedback, but create an interactive platform, where both the communicator and the receiver can now send and receive information in real time over long distances, combining the features of both traditional communication, mass communication and interpersonal communication.

This process enabled the swift and effortless dissemination of opinions and protest information. The swift and effortless circulation of protests information via these tools attracted organisers of protests. They see an opportunity to use these new media technologies in the formation of opinion or push their political objectives to influence a particular group or influential members of society. These changes and the debates surrounding it led scholars to start explaining the dynamism and complexities of protest movements and the use of technologies in organising protests (Shirky, 2011; Mutsvairo, 2016). Shirky (2008) sees new technologies as tools of democratic empowerment. This push forward the assumption that "a new technology enables a new society" (Fisher, 2010, p.230), a thinking which Miller (1956), Innis (1964) started and promoted by McLuhan (1967, p. 3) with his "media is the message" aphorism or "the determinists' view of technology" (Mariano, Barichello &Carvalho, 2013).

Social Media and activism

The term "social media" represents media that users can easily participate in and contribute. They are online communication channels that are devoted to community-based input, interaction, content-sharing, and collaboration. These channels include social networking sites, microblogs, video sharing sites, and other platforms where users generate digital content. It was coined by O'Reilly (2007) to describe the development of new platforms, features, and uses that build on users' participation in the form of user-generated content, decentralisation, and rich user experience. Social media users from all corners of the globe are able to openly articulate their opinions, concepts, passions, aspirations, preferences, and aversions within a universally interconnected communication sphere. (Bruns & Burgess, 2016).

Social media and activism are core constructs of this paper. "Social media" is a term used in media and communication studies to refer to platforms such as "Facebook, X, Youtube, Wikipedia, Linkedin, Wordpress, Blogspot, Weibo, Pininterest, Foursquare and Tumblir (Fuchs, 2014). It is an Internet-based application that allow people to create and exchange content using digital network technologies (Boyd & Ellison, 2008; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). According to Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy, and Silvestre (2011, p.241) it is a process of employing "mobile and web-based technologies to create highly interactive platforms via which individuals and communities share, co-create, discuss, and modify user-generated content".

Activism on the other hand is a form of social movement – a group whose aim is striving to work toward a common goal. These groups may be trying to create change or resist or provide a political voice to voiceless groups (Herbert, 1992). The word activism is defined as a "process by which groups of people exert pressure on organisations or other institutions to change policies, practices, or conditions the activists find problematic" (Smith, 2005, p.5). It is seen as the ability to organise people and influence them

through collective action. It is an effort in which individuals seek to make a change to the status quo. With the coming of the Internet, the concept has been broadened to cover other areas which were not in early literature of activism. The coming of the Internet, and later social media introduced new concepts of activism like "Net Activism", "Web Activism", "Online Activism", "Clicktivism", "Hashtag Activism" (Meikle, 2004; Earl, Hurwitz, Mesinas, Tolan, & Arlotti, (2013); Howard, 2011). The concepts are sometimes combined and get a general term "digital activism" (Kaun & Uldam, 2017, p.?).

Social Media and Collective Action
Social media tools are used by activists during social protests for opinion formation, communication and protest organisation. Social media then become a powerful tool use by activists to reduce their over reliance on traditional media for information and free them from the place and time limits of interpersonal communication (Lomicky & Hogg, 2010). They provide information and tools that may extend the role of the public in the social and political arena (Papacharissi, 2002). They are changing the way activists, grass roots organisation, and civil society institutions operate in collective action. They are transforming activists' politics.

Hashtag and Hashtag Activism
Hashtag or the sign "#" used on social media, especially X, started appearing online. In 2007, the micro-blogging site allowed its users to categorise their posts with the sign and followed it by a label. They are an emergent convention for labelling the topic of a micro post and a form of metadata incorporated into an X post. According to Bonilla and Rosa (2015), semiotically, hashtags serve as markers for an intended signification of an utterance, revealing the true essence of a statement. That is, the symbol reveals or stands for a concept or idea. This particular functionality facilitates the formation of communities centered around matters of concern or advocacies. (Bruns & Burgess, 2015).

Other X users could more easily identify similar posts with the sign. The feature was officially integrated into the X platform. In academic discourse, the hashtag can be likened to "keyword", a word or term that played a role in the last century. The "keyword" term had been developed in the early 20th century in our libraries and sciences and became a "subject catalogue" to make it easier to locate documents (Bernerd, 2019). Today, the hashtag has become part of our media reality. Other social media platforms like Instagram and Facebook adopted it due to its popularity (Dewey, 2014).

The activists and protests movement adopted the sign as an "ironic or poignant" slogan to mobilise protests. According to Global Citizen (2017), hashtag brings people together 125 million times a daily. In the 2nd quarter of 2023, the average use of hashtag is estimated to remained at 125 million (Socialpilot, 2023). This is attributed to the rebranding of Twitter to X. Hashtag has become instrumental in bringing movements online to the real world. From 2012 to date, the hashtag has become a symbol of social activism.

Empirical Review
Studies that examined the role of social media in organising protest are as wide as the scholars studying them and fragmented across discipline each looking at it from his own philosophical orientation. A lot of studies were conducted to look at the role played by social media in the popular uprisings in North Africa and the Middle East. Studies like those of Cohen (2011) and Webster (2011) agreed that social media is the main force behind the uprisings. An article by Juris (2012) explores the links between social media and public space within the #OccupyEverywhere movements. The paper looked at the #OccupyMovement by exploring how new media helped facilitate protests. The objective was to look at how social media was incorporated in the organisation, coordination and mobilisation of protests. The paper argued that social media have contributed to an emerging logic of aggregation in the more recent #Occupy movements—one that involves the assembling of masses of individuals from diverse backgrounds within physical spaces. The study also expands the debate about the role of social media in organizing mass protest. The article recommends the notion of cultivating more enduring modes of mobility that extend beyond physical occupations, while addressing shorter-term political goals and longer-term cultural and democratic aspirations .

Sandoval-Almazan and Gil-Garcia (2013) conducted a study in Mexico looking at a popular online protest that started in 2009 in Mexico – the #InternetNecesario to protest against Congress proposal to tax the use of Internet in Mexico. The

research utilized content analysis and website analysis to examine newspapers, magazines, and blog entries regarding the influence of social media on social protests. Findings of the study pointed a new directions of citizen participation in protests through a virtual space (social media), which offered them a space to freely express their minds, gave them an easy access to information, instantaneous and real time updates with no restrictions etc.

Gagliardone and Pohjonen (2016) looked at social media and political discourse in Africa and relationship between local activists, government and international actors in Ethiopia. The paper examined how protesters combined new and traditional communication channels to challenge the outcome of the 2005 contested elections in the country. Though Facebook and X were at their infancy stage when these protests took place, activists created blogs like the "Zone9 bloggers" and "Respect The Constitution" to protest the outcome of the elections. The study used both qualitative and quantitative methodology. The findings of the paper revealed that "the bloggers' social networks were, in fact, centred on individuals and groups based predominantly in Ethiopia and included very few actors with a global reach" (Gagliardone and Pohjonen, 2016, p.39).

A study by Ibrahim (2013) investigates the nexus that exists between public sphere and networked public sphere during 2012 *#OccupyNigeria* protests. The paper used content analysis and survey to analyse some specific Facebook group's contents of Nigerians during the period and to find out the views of Nigerians on the protests. The study found out that social media, especially Facebook served as an important mobilising tool for protests against government policies seen as anti-people. It affirmed the notion that there is affinity between socio-economic problems considered by the offline protesters before posting on the protest groups they belonged and discussed by the online protesters during 2012 Occupy Nigeria protests. It also affirmed the perceived mobilisation capabilities of social media for protests.

While papers and articles reviewed used content analysis to obtain data, this paper shifted by conducting an in-depth interview to come up with new thoughts on perceived influence of social media in protests or activism.

Theoretical Framework
This study intends to explore the Technological Determinism Theory (Media Ecology).

The Technology Determinism Theory
The Technology Determinism theory or what many scholars refer to as Media Ecology theory (West & Turner, 2010; Scolari, 2013) is traced to the works of Marshal McLuhan, to suggest mediated technology shapes people feelings, thought and actions. The theory can be defined as how media and communication processes influence human perception, feeling, understanding, and value (Parameswaran, 2008). The theory suggests that media should be understood ecologically. Changes in technology alter the *symbolic environment*—the socially constructed, sensory world of meanings that in turn shapes our perceptions, experiences, attitudes, and behavior. Technological advancements help to support the abilities of individuals, effectively acting as extension of human capabilities (McLuhan, 1964). These advancements present us with new opportunities, potentials and abilities to enhance human action.

This theory is relevant because it explains how the invention of Web 2.0 paves way for the introduction of interactive tools in the form of social media which changes how humans and the society interact and in the way it unifies people, encourage participation, and expand the scale of impact. These changes led to combination of online media technology with offline activities which bring about advocacy campaigns that greatly create social movement and impactful changes (Thitivesa, 2017).

Research Method
For this study, qualitative data were collected and the information sought were used in the interpretation of the results. The data was collected using interview guide as instrument. In-depth interview may be simply defined as "conversation with purpose" (Lune & Berg, 2017, p.65). The purpose is to get informants' account of his or her experience for further information useful to the analysis (Cook & Cook, 2008). Considering the nature of the present study, the in-depth interview provides the context with which the campaigns were organised and performed.

The informants for the in-depth interview were selected purposively for the interview from the list of major players in the two protests campaigns. The researcher purposively identified six individuals for the interview because of their central role in the organisation of the protests.

Three from #OccupyNigeria and three from #BringBacOurGirls. The informants are spread – 1 in Kano, 2 in Abuja, 1 in Lagos, 1 in Abia and 1 in the United States. The interviews were online.

The informants are activists even before the #OccupyNigeria and #BringBackOurGirls. They work in many Civil Society Organisations like Action Aid, CITAD, CISLAC. The spent years advocating for human rights, legal and social movements, and advocating for democratic reforms for more than 25 years.

Their responses were analysed and discussed thematically.

The paper divided the responses in themes, the themes identified are:
1.   Mobilisation
2.   Online and Offline protests
3.   Slacktivism and Activism

Data Presentation
Mobilisation:

The general assumption is that social media tools offer protesters an avenue for mobilisation. Informants were asked to comment on how social media were used to mobilise for the protest. Below is the analysis of what they said.

The interviewers identified perceived influence of social media in mobilisation of the protests and relate them to how the tools were adopted during the protests. The #BringBackOurGirls (BBOG) movement utilised social media for advocacy and to disseminate information on the status of the kidnapped girls, the protests itself and also the physical demonstrations. They also employed social media to inspire global support and outcry over the abducted girls. Of course, the social media was used to amplify the activities of the movement. In fact, from the onset, BBOG utilised social media.

Except Informant 4:

> BBOG was a child of necessity arising from the Federal Government's inaction to the abduction of 276 girls from Girls Secondary school Chibok Borno state (sic) on the 14th of April 2014. The movement's strategy for demanding for the rescue of our girls by the Government is hinged on the following modes of activism engagements; Social media, Traditional media, Stakeholders engagements, Street Protests and Daily Sit out Protests.

For #OccupyNigeria, social media was used to inform the public about the protest. The tools were also used to mobilise people to join the protest. However, among the groups that participated in the protests, not all agreed to have used social media. In fact, informant 1 said some protesters of the #OccupyNigeria argued that they could not remember using social media much during the protest. Therefore, they cannot say all the various groups that joined the #OccupyNigeria protests used social media. They even dismissed the idea that the protest was social media protest.

Excerpt Informant 3:

> Some of us don't see #OccupyNigeria as a hashtag protest: it was a spontaneous reaction to the unceremonious fuel price rise thrust upon Nigerians over the Christmas holidays. As far as we can recall, the protests came first, the hashtag came later or was the rallying factor for protests that were going to take place with or without a hashtag.

Online and Offline protest:

The coming of social media also increased the perceived roles the tools play in the changing culture of protests from street to Internet protest. This has been called online and offline protest. Informants were asked about the protests and where they belong, whether online or offline.

Most social media enthusiasts (Mutsivaro, 2016; Sandoval-Almazan, & Gil-Garcia, 2014) believe that social media will replace street protests.

However, when responding to question about the two protests, for the organisers BBOG, street protest was non-negotiable and was an effective traditional form of protest by citizens. However, they all agreed that social media is necessary to escalate the physical protests well beyond the reach of street protest or traditional media. Therefore, the BBOG combined both street protests and online or social media protests. This according to the informants, social media was used to reach more people more affordably and more effectively.

Excerpt Informant 5:

> BBOG deployed social media to bridge the gap of traditional media and while there are people who never made it to any street protest, we couldn't be more grateful to have their voices join ours in demanding for the rescue of our girls.

Excerpt Informant 4:

> The social media protests were necessary to escalate the physical protests well beyond the reach of traditional media. This enabled the movement reach millions of people across the globe almost at no monetary cost which would have been impossible with traditional media.

#OccupyNigeria protesters had a different opinion. They agreed that the protest was not purely a hashtag protest, but a spontaneous reaction to the unceremonious fuel price rise thrust upon Nigerians over the Christmas and New Year holidays. However, social media was used to communicate, coordinate and mobilise people to come out for the protest.

Excerpt Informant 2:

> In this sense, it will be conceptually wrong to see #OccupyNigeria as social media-based (online) protest and juxtapose it with a physical protest. This was for instance, different from the Seattle anti-WTO protests in which cyber activists jammed the website of WTO and its undermined its communication capacity such that the protest was successful in making it difficult for the WTO summit to hold.

Slacktivism and Activism: Critics of social media protests see it as lazy activism and termed it slacktivism, while social media enthusiasts see it as activism like any other activism. Informants were asked to comment on these two perceived roles of social media protests. The debate was that; most social media activists cannot be classified as serious activists. BBOG activists argue that activists are activists irrespective of the mode adopted. They feel the classification of activists into "slacktivism" and "activism" based on mode is disservice to people who have decided to lend their voices, time and resources to noble causes across the world.

Excerpt Informant 6:

> BBOG deployed social media to bridge the gap of traditional media and while there are people who never made it to any street protest, we couldn't be more grateful to have their voices join ours in demanding for the rescue of our girls. There are no classifications, you are either an activist or you are not

Social media according to them, was deployed to bridge the gap left by traditional media in terms of galvanizing the Nigerians to join the protests. While there are people who never made it to any street protests, their voices join in demanding for the rescue of the Chibok girls. Without the use of social media, the BBOG campaign would not have gained worldwide attention as fast as it did.

The #OccupyNigeria activists on the hand have divergent view about the whole issue of "slacktivism" and "activism". Informant 2 and 3 who were #OccupyNigeria activists argue that mere online activism is unlikely to effect serious change, but it helps in attracting media attention. A protest to change government policy will make use of social media to attract media attention as seen in the case of Occupy.

However, the Informant 2 argued that those sneering online activism have not done any actual activism themselves, whether online or offline. Informant 5 explained that while others do activism purely to raise their profile, others genuinely exercised outrage about issue and want to register their protest and social media provides the space.

> This may not necessarily be correct, every generation must generate is protest means and culture. The 21st century is an information and communication age, just like what books and newspapers (printing) was to the 19th and the 20th century protest and resistance culture. Sure, not all social media activists are deeply committed, but so are street activists who don't necessarily believe. The difference is largely generational.

For them, social media is just a tool that protesters could deploy as they did during Occupy. The success of any activism is not inherent in the tool itself, it is dependent on how you deploy it, in what context and for what purpose, the strategy, tactics behind the overall deployment.

Discussion
The idea that social media has been changing the culture of activism has been gaining ground since

the 2011 Arab Spring and the "Twitter revolutions" in Iran and Moldova. Its perceived influence on the organisation, mobilisation and coordination of protests also attracted debates among scholars. This paper brings out these perceived influences and how it was deployed in the two protests that happened in Nigeria in 2012 and 2014 – the #OccupyNigeria and #BringBackOurGirls.

The organisers #OccupyNigeria and #BringBackOurGirls movements have confirmed that social media was used during the protests, however, the perceived influence of the tools on organisation, mobilisation and coordination of the protests has been different between the two movements.

The objective of the study is to establish the perceived influence of social media in the #OccupyNigeria and #BringBackOurGirls social protests.

A number of conclusions can be drawn from the findings of this paper presented in the data. Although the sample is small, it is the opinion of this paper that findings provide a meaningful insights that can help us understand the influence of social media in the organisation, mobilisation and coordination of protests and activism in Nigeria.

The in-depth interview showed that social media was used by both #BringBackOurGirls and #OccupyNigeria during their protests and they specifically used them for mobilisation and creation of awareness on the two protests. They both used social media to inspire global support and outcry. Freedom House, (2014) acknowledged the power of social media to draw widespread attention to important issues and demand government accountability. In fact, the hashtag campaigns in the Bring Back Our Girls succeeded in raising global awareness and coordinating activists in support of the protests. Foreign government and celebrities all keyed in to raise awareness by using the hashtag in commenting about the abduction of the Chibok girls.

However, the organisers of #OccupyNigeria hold slightly different opinion about the role of social media in organizing the protests. Some Informants during the interview acknowledged that they cannot remember using social media during the protests, but they were out in the field, especially Informant 3, who organised the protests in Lagos. However, there are many empirical evidence that point to the role social media played during the protest, which this paper affirmed through interview with the #OccupyNigeria and #BringBackOurGirls activists. Her opinion is a minority opinion affirms some opinions that suggest media do not "create revolutions; people with courage do" (Seib, 2012, p.41), because the #OccupyNigeria was a spontaneous response to the arbitrary increase in fuel prices by the Goodluck Ebele Jonathan government on January 1, 2012. The hashtag came after the street protests to spur citizens support in Nigeria and globally.

That does not remove the fact that social media have been useful in allowing social movements to communicate, organise their actions and mobilise their constituencies (Gerbaudo, 2019) as we have seen in both #BringBackOurGirls and #OccupyNigeria. The result of this study shows that the protests are street protests but social media was used to communicate, coordinate and mobilise people to come out for the street protests. Social media helped in escalating the protest well beyond the reach of traditional media.

The results show that both #BringBackOurGirls and OccupyNigeria started their street demonstrations, rallies, sit-ins before the creation of the two hashtags. The two hashtags provided space through which these protests were mobilised, organised and executed.

Conclusion

From the foregoing, the paper concludes that both #BringBackOurGirls and #OccupyNigeria were street protests which some scholars refer to as "real activism", however, the two protests used social media specifically to mobilise people to join the protests and galvanise support from Nigerians and at the same time attract global support. Also, the paper concludes that there is no difference between street protest and online protest. The two are all activism however, mere online activism is unlikely to attract serious change but it helps in attracting media attention.

From the findings, the paper can also conclude that social media is just a tool that protesters could deploy as they did during occupy movements. Therefore, their influence depends on the commitments of those using it for the protests. The success of activism depends on the way the tools are deployed, the context, the purpose, the strategy adopted and tactics behind the overall deployment.

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