

Front Matter

Abstract

On May 30th, 2017, a sit-at-home order was planned by organisers of the struggle for a sovereign Biafran state¹. This protest was largely mobilised via social computing sites such as twitter and Facebook and was deemed a success due to the unprecedented level of compliance across the south-eastern region of Nigeria². However, this success did not correspond with the patterns deduced from the #Biafra twitter network. The network was lacking in terms of poor coherence in their message, shabbily crafted narratives etc. So, could there be something more at play in driving the success of these social media inspired campaigns, and would that deliver the long-term goals of independence for the 'Biafran state'? This research explores these issues using NodeXL analytic tool to analyse the interaction of these groups on the #Biafra twitter network. The findings are then discussed using Adaptive structuration theory to explore the existing gaps in the impact of social computing sites on self-determination groups in south eastern Nigeria. By doing so, I deduced that, the interaction between socio-political entities and technology is an iterative one between technology, tasks and groups understanding of the two. Furthermore, while social computing sites was used as an avenue to mobilise people, the success was a product of existing societal perceptions on the self-determination struggle in south eastern Nigeria and if these perceptions continued there is little hope for actualising their agenda.

Introduction

Underscoring the global revolutionary impact of social computing sites today are the numerous ways in which these sites are reshaping the general political structures of societies, social movements and even diplomacy³. More specifically, these digital platforms are constantly unveiling new avenues in activism for expressing emotions and perceptions even as the role of keeping the public informed and holding governments accountable rapidly shifts to individuals, notably the civil service organisations and the youth, armed with social computing sites. In Nigeria, socio-

¹ Officially called the Republic of Biafra, this was a secessionist state in south eastern Nigeria that existed from 30 May 1967 to January 1970. It took its name from the Bight of Biafra, the Atlantic bay to its south. The inhabitants were mostly the Igbo people who felt the need to separate due to economic, ethnic, cultural and religious tensions among the various peoples of Nigeria. Since 2011 it has been the subject of a resurgence in its demand for a separate state with various organisations attempting to lead the efforts.

² <http://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/311708-nigeria-2017-may-30-sit-at-home-order.html>

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