Globalisation and the Social Media: A Case of Modern Imperialism in Nigeria?

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Abstract

Globalisation as propelled by the rapid expansion of social media has significantly reshaped cultural landscapes worldwide. Social media in Nigeria serves as both a platform for cultural exchange and a conduit for modern imperialism, facilitating the pervasive dominance of Western ideologies, values, and lifestyles. This study critically examines the role of social media in advancing Western cultural hegemony in Nigeria under the framework of modern imperialism. It explores how digital platforms influence identity formation, traditional values, and indigenous knowledge systems while assessing the extent to which globalisation has led to the erosion or transformation of Nigerian cultural heritage. Through a qualitative approach drawing from cultural studies, media theories like the Digital Colonialism Theory, and globalisation discourse, this study interrogates the algorithmic biases that shape content visibility on social media platforms, often marginalising local narratives in favor of Western-centric perspectives. It further investigates the implications of these digital hierarchies on national identity, language use, and socio-cultural practices. Despite these challenges, the study acknowledges the agency of Nigerian users in resisting cultural subjugation through content creation, digital activism, and the strategic promotion of indigenous traditions. Findings reveal that while social media perpetuates modern imperialism by reinforcing Western dominance, it simultaneously offers opportunities for cultural revival and global recognition of Nigerian heritage. The study concludes that navigating this duality requires proactive measures, including policy interventions, algorithmic fairness, media literacy programs, and strategic cultural branding to safeguard Nigeria's cultural identity in the digital era. This research contributes to ongoing scholarly debates on digital imperialism and globalisation's impact on cultural sustainability, advocating for a more inclusive digital ecosystem that amplifies African voices.

Keywords: *Globalisation, Social Media, Modern Imperialism, Nigerian Identity, Cultural Erosion, Algorithmic Bias, Digital Colonialism*

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Background to the Study

The advent of technological innovations has significantly transformed the world from an analogue to a digitalized global society. This transformation aligns with Marshall McLuhan's concept of the "global village," which Baran (2010) describes as a phenomenon where the world becomes a place where people "become increasingly involved in one another's lives through the media." Globalization is primarily driven by advancements in information technology and communication, promoting relationships between nations, transcending geographical boundaries, and reshaping interactions between states and their citizens (Aseman, 2011). Through globalization, social media platforms have become powerful tools for cultural exchange and dissemination, enabling the rapid spread of ideas, values, and practices across borders. In Nigeria, social media has played a crucial role in shaping public discourse, influencing political movements, and promoting economic opportunities. However, its impact extends beyond mere connectivity; it also serves as a medium for modern imperialism, where dominant global cultures exert influence over local traditions, values, and lifestyles.

Social media are instrumental agents of globalization, ensuring that various cultures reach transnational audiences (Scott & Marshall, 2005). Cultural values, which define the uniqueness of a people, are now more accessible than ever, facilitating interactions across religious, political, and social lines. However, these interactions have also led to concerns about cultural homogenization, where dominant Western cultures overshadow indigenous traditions. This cultural shift has been observed in Nigeria, where the prevalence of Western music, fashion, and entertainment influences youth preferences and societal norms (Babatunde & Ifedayo, 2015). The concern is that such exposure, while beneficial for cultural exchange, may erode indigenous Nigerian values, leading to the gradual displacement of traditional heritage. Nigeria as often referred to as the 'Giant of Africa,' boasts a rich history of cultures, languages, and traditions. However, the intensification of global interactions facilitated by digital technologies poses both opportunities and challenges to the preservation of Nigeria's cultural heritage (Olaniyan, 2018). The increasing accessibility of Western media content through social media platforms has created an environment where foreign lifestyles and ideologies are rapidly adopted, sometimes at the expense of indigenous cultural practices (Adeniyi & Adeniyi, 2016). The extensive reach of social media ensures that Western ideologies on governance, democracy, and consumerism infiltrate Nigerian society, sometimes creating friction between traditional and contemporary ways of life.

The media landscape in Nigeria has evolved, transitioning from traditional print and broadcast media to digital and social media platforms. Today, the influence of electronic media, particularly the internet, continues to shape public opinion and social behavior. This transformation, while promoting inclusivity in global conversations, has also amplified the challenges of cultural imperialism. According to Oni (2005), Nigerian youths are increasingly adopting Western cultural elements, reflected in their dressing, language, and entertainment choices. This shift has raised concerns about the gradual erosion of indigenous cultural values, as younger generations prioritize Western ideals over traditional African heritage. Moreover, the forces of globalization have influenced Nigeria's development

trajectory, such that it affects economic policies, governance, and societal structures. The integration of Western cultural norms into Nigerian society has altered perceptions of identity, with many individuals assimilating foreign lifestyles in pursuit of modernization. While this exposure presents opportunities for cultural hybridization and economic advancement, it also raises critical questions about cultural sovereignty and the preservation of indigenous traditions. In light of these concerns, this study seeks to explore the interplay between globalization, social media, and mordern imperialism in Nigeria. It will critically examine how social media platforms serve as conduits for cultural exchange while simultaneously acting as tools for modern imperialism. The study will also assess the extent to which Nigerian cultural values are being influenced, altered, or preserved in the digital age.

Statement of the Problem

Globalisation driven by advancements in communication technologies, has transformed the world into an interconnected digital space, where social media platforms serve as primary channels for cultural exchange and information dissemination. While globalisation has prom oted economic growth, knowledge sharing, and socio-political awareness, it has also introduced complex challenges, particularly for developing nations like Nigeria. One of the most significant concerns is the phenomenon of modern imperialism facilitated by social media—where dominant Western ideologies, lifestyles, and cultural values overshadow indigenous traditions and reshape local identities (Adeniyi & Adeniyi, 2016).

Social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and TikTok etc, have become instruments for the rapid spread of global cultural narratives, often reinforcing Western hegemonic influence at the expense of local Nigerian traditions. The increasing adoption of Western norms in fashion, music, language, and even political ideologies through digital content has contributed to a gradual erosion of Nigeria's indigenous identity (Babatunde & Ifedayo, 2015). This digital cultural invasion is not merely an exchange of ideas but a form of subtle imperialism, where Western-dominated content exerts a profound influence on perceptions, values, and behaviors of Nigerian youths, leading to the marginalisation of local heritage (Oni, 2005).

The dominance of Western-owned digital platforms raises concerns over digital dependency. Most social media infrastructures, algorithms, and regulations are controlled by Western tech giants, determining the visibility and reach of content. Consequently, Nigerian cultural narratives struggle to gain prominence in the global discourse, as algorithmic biases often prioritize Western content over local perspectives (Scott & Marshall, 2005). The problem, therefore lies in the paradox of globalisation—while social media provides a platform for cultural visibility, it simultaneously acts as a tool for Western domination, and this threatens the sustainability of Nigeria's indigenous cultural heritage. Without strategic interventions and policies to safeguard local content, Nigeria risks further cultural subjugation in the digital age. This study seeks to critically examine the intersection of globalisation, social media, and modern imperialism in Nigeria, shedding light on the implications for national identity and cultural preservation.

Research Questions

    i.   How has social media contributed to the spread of Western cultural dominance in Nigeria under the framework of modern imperialism?

    ii. To what extent has globalisation, through social media, influenced the erosion or transformation of indigenous Nigerian cultural values and traditions?

    iii. What role do social media platforms play in shaping perceptions of Nigerian identity, and how do algorithmic biases impact local content visibility?

Objectives of the Study

This study aims to examine the impact of globalisation and social media as tools of modern imperialism in Nigeria, the specific objectives of this study are to:

    i.   Analyze the role of social media in the dissemination of Western ideologies and cultural norms in Nigeria under the influence of globalisation.

    ii. Assess the extent to which globalisation and social media have contributed to the erosion, modification, or hybridisation of indigenous Nigerian cultural values.

    iii. Investigate how social media algorithms and digital platforms influence the visibility and representation of Nigerian culture in the global digital space.

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research approach to explore the intersection of globalisation, social media, and modern imperialism in Nigeria. A qualitative design allows for an in-depth analysis of textual data, scholarly discourses, and empirical findings. The research is structured as a descriptive and analytical study, employing content analysis to critically examine existing literature, policy documents, media reports, and scholarly articles on globalisation, social media, and cultural imperialism in Nigeria. Data is collected through documentary research, sourcing information from peer-reviewed journal articles, books, reports from international organisations (e.g., UNESCO, UNCTAD, World Bank), government policies, and digital content from social media platforms. Sources are selected based on credibility, scholarly relevance, and accessibility, ensuring verifiability.

Theoretical Framework

The concept of modern imperialism in the digital age is best explained through the Digital Colonialism Theory, a framework that critically examines how technology giants from the Global North dominate digital infrastructures, data, and information systems in the Global South. This theory highlights the ways in which multinational tech corporations extend their influence, not just economically, but also culturally and politically, creating new forms of dependency and control (Couldry & Mejias, 2019). Unlike traditional imperialism that relied on military and political conquest, digital colonialism operates through data extraction, algorithmic governance, and the monopolization of digital tools, shaping global information flows in favor of Western-dominated platforms (Zuboff, 2019).

The Digital Colonialism Theory was developed by Nick Couldry and Ulises Mejias in 2019. In their seminal work, *The Costs of Connection: How Data is Colonizing Human Life and Appropriating It for Capitalism*, they argue that data extraction has become the modern

equivalent of resource exploitation during colonial times (Couldry & Mejias, 2019). They describe digital colonialism as the process where major corporations, such as Meta (formerly Facebook), Google, and Amazon, assert dominance over global digital infrastructures, leaving nations like Nigeria in a state of technological dependency. The theory builds upon earlier critical discussions on data capitalism and expands the discourse to include power asymmetries between the Global North and the Global South.

Several scholars have contributed to the advancement of Digital Colonialism Theory. Shoshana Zuboff (2019), in her book *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism*, examines how digital platforms exploit user data for profit, reinforcing Couldry and Mejias' assertion that global tech corporations establish digital dependencies on developing countries. Achille Mbembe (2021) has also explored digital imperialism from an African perspective, highlighting how Western digital infrastructures dictate narratives and cultural values in African nations. Dal Yong Jin (2020) extends this discussion by linking digital colonialism to platform imperialism, demonstrating how American and Chinese tech companies extract economic and cultural capital from non-Western societies. These contributions provide empirical backing to Couldry and Mejias' work and broaden the understanding of how digital colonialism perpetuates global inequalities. The key propositions of Digital Colonialism Theory revolve around three fundamental ideas: (1) Data as the new form of colonial resource extraction, where personal information is collected, stored, and monetized without meaningful control by local governments; (2) The monopolization of digital infrastructures by Western tech firms, creating a power imbalance that limits technological sovereignty in the Global South; and (3) Algorithmic governance and digital dependence, where platforms such as YouTube, Twitter, and Instagram shape discourse, values, and cultural production in countries like Nigeria, often reinforcing Western ideologies while marginalizing indigenous perspectives (Couldry & Mejias, 2019).

The relevance of Digital Colonialism Theory to this study lies in its ability to explain how globalization and social media have become tools for modern imperialism in Nigeria. The increasing dominance of Western-owned digital platforms in Nigeria has led to a situation where local cultural narratives, economic systems, and even political discourses are shaped by foreign technological infrastructures. This theory helps to contextualize the ways in which social media, while promoting global connectivity, simultaneously erodes digital and cultural sovereignty, making Nigeria reliant on Western-defined digital norms and policies. Furthermore, the theory sheds light on the dangers of algorithmic bias, where African voices and narratives are often marginalized due to opaque and Western-centric content moderation policies (Jin, 2020). The insights provided by this theory are essential for understanding how digital imperialism manifests in the Nigerian digital landscape and for exploring strategies to reclaim digital autonomy and cultural agency.

Literature Review
The Concept of Globalisation
Globalisation is a multifaceted and multidimensional process that has significantly altered economic, political, social, and cultural landscapes worldwide. It is often characterised by the

increasing interconnectedness and interdependence among nations, which is facilitated by technological advancements, trade liberalisation, and the flow of information across borders (Tar, 2016). The phenomenon has transformed the world into what McLuhan (1964) famously termed a "global village," where distance and physical barriers to communication and interaction are significantly reduced.

Scholars have provided various definitions of globalisation, they often highlighta its economic, political, and cultural dimensions. According to McGrew (2013), globalisation represents the widening, deepening, and acceleration of worldwide interconnectedness in all aspects of contemporary social life. Similarly, Obadan (2004) describes it as the increasing interdependence among the world's nations, governments, businesses, and individuals, driven primarily by technological advancements and the expansion of global markets. Oluikpe (2022) further conceptualises globalisation as the integration of various countries into a singular global system, facilitating trade, investments, cultural exchanges, and economic transactions through information technology. This interconnection has led to an unprecedented fusion of cultures, enabling the rapid diffusion of ideas, values, and practices across different regions.

A fundamental aspect of globalisation is its cultural impact. Hagerstrand (2007) argues that globalisation has enabled the rapid diffusion of ideas and cultural practices, facilitated by satellite communication and the internet. This process has resulted in what Afolayan (2015) describes as the platform for developing nations to showcase their cultural heritage while simultaneously being exposed to the dominant influence of Western cultural norms and values. While some scholars see this cultural exchange as mutually beneficial, others argue that it primarily favours developed nations, reinforcing the dominance of Western ideologies and lifestyles over local traditions. This perspective aligns with the views of Cox (2002), who asserts that globalisation is often accompanied by the homogenisation of cultures, driven by Western economic and cultural dominance in global markets.

The role of mass media in globalisation is particularly significant, as it serves as a primary vehicle for cultural transmission. Castells (1997) contends that the mass media, particularly television and digital platforms, play a central role in shaping global cultural narratives. Cecilia (2019) further argues that media globalisation disproportionately influences children, as they are more susceptible to adopting foreign cultural values through entertainment content such as cartoons, films, and social media trends. This has raised concerns about cultural imperialism, where dominant nations impose their cultural values on less powerful societies through media and technological means (David, 2002). Despite its numerous benefits, globalisation has been critiqued for exacerbating inequalities between developed and developing nations. Nsibambi (2001) notes that while globalisation promotes economic growth and technological advancement, it also creates disparities by consolidating power and wealth within dominant economies, often at the expense of weaker ones. In the Nigerian context, globalisation has facilitated economic development and technological progress but has also contributed to cultural erosion and dependency on Western ideologies (Afolayan, 2015).

The concept of "media globalisation" illustrates how Western media corporations dominate the global information space, influencing perceptions and shaping societal values worldwide. This dominance has led to concerns about the loss of indigenous cultures, as Western narratives often overshadow local perspectives. The MacBride Report (UNESCO, 1980) highlighted these concerns, advocating for a more balanced global information flow to prevent cultural imperialism and maintain cultural sovereignty among developing nations.

The Concept of Social Media

Social media as a transformative digital phenomenon, encompasses online platforms that facilitate interaction, content creation, and sharing among users across a diverse range of formats, including text, images, videos, and audio (Obar & Wildman, 2015). These platforms have revolutionized modern communication, effectively bridging geographical and temporal gaps. Social media promotes participatory engagement, enabling users to share opinions, build networks, and engage in discourse, which significantly impacts public communication and opinion formation (Appel et al., 2020). Scholars have defined social media in various ways, all emphasizing its role in digital-age communication and interaction. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) describe social media as "a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, allowing the creation and exchange of user-generated content." Similarly, Obar and Wildman (2015) highlight social media as platforms that allow real-time interaction and engagement, fostering dynamic online communities. Kietzmann et al. (2011) further emphasize its diverse nature, categorizing it as a collection of online tools and services that facilitate social networking, content creation, and communication across global networks. These definitions underline the multifaceted nature of social media and its role in shaping modern communication practices and public opinion.

Social media serves as a critical tool for disseminating information and shaping societal narratives. Platforms like Twitter and Facebook have become central to public discourse, offering real-time spaces where users can influence public conversations. The immediacy of social media enables users to respond to events instantly, often leading to discussions that transcend traditional media boundaries (Murphy, Hill, & Dean, 2013). This characteristic has positioned social media as a powerful medium for both information distribution and public engagement, significantly altering how news is consumed and public opinions are formed. Unlike traditional media—such as television, radio, and print, which predominantly function as one-way communication channels—social media enables two-way interaction, where users are active participants rather than passive recipients of information (Yohanna, 2020). This interaction fosters a more inclusive and participatory form of communication. For instance, during political campaigns, candidates and their supporters utilize social media platforms like Twitter and Facebook to engage with the electorate, share policy proposals, and address public concerns, thereby influencing voter behavior (Duggan & Smith, 2013). Social networking sites such as Facebook and LinkedIn allow users to create and join groups based on shared interests, professions, or causes. These online communities' function as platforms for discussion, event organization, and social mobilization (Nwanne, 2015). The ease of information dissemination on social media also enhances the coordination of collective action, solidifying its role in shaping public discourse and activism.

However, the ease of information sharing on social media also facilitates the spread of misinformation and fake news, which can have detrimental effects on public opinion and social cohesion (Ademosu & Oyeleye, 2019). The anonymity provided by these platforms can lead to negative behaviors such as cyberbullying and hate speech, which may contribute to societal polarization and individual alienation (Aronson, 2005). Despite these challenges, social media remains an unparalleled tool for communication, empowering individuals and groups to engage in digital interactions with unprecedented accessibility.

The concept of social media aligns closely with globalization, as both emphasize integration, connectivity, and the breakdown of traditional barriers. As Dewing (2012) posits, social media consists of a broad spectrum of internet-based and mobile services that allow users to participate in online exchanges, contribute user-created content, and engage in digital communities. Chmielewski, as cited in Cohen (2011), further asserts that social media is not solely about individual expression but rather about collective interaction on a global scale. This perspective reinforces the idea that social media fosters communality, engagement, and involvement across societies, effectively making the world more interconnected. The distinction between public and private communication is often blurred on social media, where real-time interactions enable both individual and group engagement. As Cammaerts (2015) highlights, social media facilitates various forms of communication, including one-to-one, one-to-many, and many-to-many interactions, all converging on a single digital platform. This characteristic makes social media particularly relevant for activism and social movements, where immediate and large-scale mobilization is required. For instance, during the Arab Spring, platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube were instrumental in organizing demonstrations and rallying support against oppressive regimes, showcasing the vast reach and influence of social media (Omoera & Ryanga, 2017).

In the Nigerian context, social media plays a pivotal role in mass communication, influencing public opinion, political discourse, and cultural expression. Nigerian media, which traditionally served to inform, persuade, and mobilize citizens, has integrated social media as a key tool in modern communication (Okunola, 2013). However, the dominance of Western media influences has also shaped how social media is utilized in Nigeria. Language remains a crucial factor in digital communication, with English serving as the official medium, albeit in a localized form known as Nigerian English (Wikipedia, 2019). This nativized dialect incorporates loanwords from indigenous languages and is used extensively in political discourse, education, and digital media. Given Nigeria's multilingual nature, social media provides a platform where diverse linguistic and cultural identities can coexist, thereby reinforcing national integration while also promoting local content. With the increasing penetration of social media in Nigeria, it has become an essential platform for advocacy, education, and mobilization. The responsibility of Nigerian media in this regard extends beyond content dissemination to include curating culturally relevant information, promoting local narratives, and counteracting the negative effects of globalization. Swills and Magrin (2002) argue that effective media communication can dispel ignorance and foster national development. As such, the role of social media in Nigeria is not only to connect people but also to serve as a tool for cultural preservation, social mobilization, and economic empowerment.

The Concept of Modern Imperialism

Modern imperialism refers to the various ways powerful nations exert control over less powerful regions through economic, political, cultural, and military means (Arneil, 2024). Unlike classical imperialism, which involved direct colonization and territorial expansion, modern imperialism often operates through economic dependency, political influence, cultural domination, and military presence (Novo, 2022). Scholars have conceptualized modern imperialism in various ways, reflecting its economic, political, and cultural dimensions. Lenin (1917) defines imperialism as "the highest stage of capitalism," where advanced economies extend their dominance over weaker nations through financial monopolies and economic dependencies. Harvey (2003) expands on this, describing imperialism as "the geographical expansion of capital through mechanisms such as multinational corporations, debt dependency, and financial institutions that reinforce global inequality." According to Hardt and Negri (2000), modern imperialism differs from classical imperialism because it operates without the direct occupation of territories. Instead, it functions through global governance structures, trade agreements, and transnational institutions that dictate economic and political outcomes in weaker states. Boyd-Barrett (2021) also emphasizes the role of media and digital technologies in perpetuating cultural and ideological dominance, arguing that social media platforms serve as tools of cultural imperialism by promoting Western values globally. Mamdani (2020) takes a postcolonial perspective, asserting that modern imperialism is "a continuation of colonial relations in a new form," where former colonial powers maintain control over African and Asian economies through political alliances, financial instruments, and military interventions. Similarly, Galtung (1971) introduced the concept of "structural imperialism," explaining how core nations exploit periphery nations by maintaining unequal economic relationships that benefit dominant states at the expense of weaker ones.

Economic imperialism is one of the most dominant forms of modern imperialism, where economically strong nations control global markets, dictate financial policies, and exploit resources in weaker economies (Amin, 2023). This often occurs through multinational corporations (MNCs), trade policies, and financial institutions like the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF), which impose structural adjustments that favor capitalist economies at the expense of developing nations (Harvey, 2022). For example, Africa remains economically dependent on Western nations due to historical colonial ties and continued reliance on foreign investments and loans (Rodney, 2018). Countries such as Nigeria, despite being rich in oil resources, still face economic imperialism through unfavorable trade agreements, foreign debt, and corporate exploitation by Western oil firms (Bello, 2021).

Cultural imperialism refers to the dominance of one culture over another, usually through media, language, and entertainment (Tomlinson, 2019). The global spread of Western media, fashion, consumer culture, and education systems has contributed to the erosion of indigenous traditions in many parts of the world, including Nigeria (Schiller, 2020). Social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok have accelerated cultural imperialism by promoting Western ideals of beauty, lifestyle, and consumer behavior, often marginalizing

local cultures (Boyd-Barrett, 2021). Nigerian youths, for example, are increasingly adopting Western cultural values at the expense of indigenous languages, traditions, and moral values (Ekeh, 2021). Politically, modern imperialism manifests through diplomatic influence, election interference, and support for puppet governments (Robinson, 2023). The United States, for instance, has been accused of backing political regimes in Africa that serve its economic and strategic interests (Chomsky, 2022).

Militarily imperialism is sustained through foreign military bases, military aid, and strategic interventions (Galtung, 2023). The U.S. and other NATO powers have maintained a strong military presence in Africa and the Middle East under the guise of security and counterterrorism efforts, while critics argue that these interventions serve geopolitical interests rather than humanitarian concerns (Mamdani, 2020). Some scholars argue that the concept of modern imperialism is sometimes misapplied, as globalization itself promotes interconnectedness rather than exploitation (Hardt & Negri, 2019). However, others insist that globalization is simply a new form of imperialism that allows wealthy nations to control weaker ones through economic and cultural dominance rather than direct rule (Petras, 2021).

The Missing Gap
Despite extensive discussions on globalization and social media, a critical gap remains in understanding how these forces collectively shape modern imperialism in Nigeria. Existing literature predominantly focuses on either the broad effects of globalization or the impact of social media on political, economic, and cultural landscapes. However, there is limited exploration of the interplay between these two phenomena and how they contribute to a new form of digital colonization that reinforces foreign dominance over local narratives, economies, and cultural identities. One of the fundamental gaps in research is the insufficient examination of how Nigerian social media platforms are influenced by external algorithms, data policies, and content regulations. While social media serves as a tool for empowerment, communication, and mobilization, it is primarily governed by Western tech giants such as Meta (formerly Facebook), Twitter, and Google. These corporations dictate content visibility, engagement algorithms, and censorship policies, often sidelining indigenous content and prioritizing narratives that align with global hegemonic interests. This imbalance undermines Nigeria's capacity to fully utilize social media for self-representation and national development. There is an absence of critical discourse on how social media perpetuates economic dependency. The digital economy, largely controlled by foreign corporations, extracts value from Nigerian content creators, businesses, and advertisers, redirecting financial benefits to foreign entities. While Nigeria experiences an influx of digital opportunities, it remains on the receiving end of monetization structures that favor external stakeholders, thereby deepening the country's economic subordination within the globalized digital landscape.

Culturally, social media has accelerated the erosion of indigenous languages, traditions, and values. Westernized content dominates online spaces, influencing consumption patterns, lifestyle aspirations, and even governance models. The existing body of work has not sufficiently analyzed the long-term consequences of this cultural imperialism, particularly

how it affects national identity, historical consciousness, and generational knowledge transmission. Moreover, scholarly discussions rarely address the mechanisms through which social media platforms amplify social divisions within Nigeria. Algorithm-driven echo chambers, misinformation, and targeted political campaigns have heightened ethno-religious tensions, yet research has not adequately explored the role of social media in reinforcing these fractures or the policy measures needed to counteract them. Addressing these gaps requires interdisciplinary approaches that merge political economy, digital media studies, and cultural theory. Without critical interrogation of how globalization and social media converge to redefine imperialism in Nigeria, the discourse remains incomplete. This study seeks to bridge this gap by providing an in-depth analysis of the interconnectedness between digital globalization and the socio-political realities of modern Nigeria, offering recommendations for a more equitable digital future.

The Discourse

The relationship between globalization and social media as a tool of modern imperialism in Nigeria presents a complex and multifaceted discourse. As the digital age advances, the integration of Nigeria into the global information ecosystem has accelerated, largely facilitated by social media platforms that serve as channels for cultural, political, and economic exchanges. However, this digital interconnectedness is not without consequences, particularly in the context of cultural sovereignty, political autonomy, and economic self-reliance. This discourse examines the dialectical interactions between globalization, social media, and modern imperialism, with an emphasis on how social media reinforces Western hegemonic structures, shapes political narratives, influences socio-cultural transformations, and affects local economies in Nigeria.

Globalization, Social Media, and Cultural Imperialism

The advent of social media has intensified the transmission of Western values, norms, and ideologies, often at the expense of indigenous Nigerian cultures. Platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and TikTok operate under algorithms designed to prioritize Western content, thereby shaping user preferences and influencing cultural consumption patterns (Castells, 2010). This has led to what scholars describe as "digital colonialism," wherein the cultural output of the Global South is continuously subordinated to that of the West (Couldry & Mejias, 2019). The dominance of English as the primary language of engagement on these platforms further exacerbates the erosion of indigenous languages, making Nigerian linguistic and cultural heritage increasingly peripheral in the global digital space (Chibuwe & Ureke, 2016). Moreover, the portrayal of Western lifestyles as aspirational on social media fosters an environment where Nigerian youths, in particular, develop a preference for Western cultural artifacts over local traditions. The overrepresentation of Western fashion, music, and ideologies contributes to a cultural homogenization that dilutes indigenous values and fosters consumerist behaviors rooted in Western capitalistic ideals (Thussu, 2006). This aligns with the broader argument of media imperialism, where cultural products from the Global North dominate and restructure the cultural landscape of developing nations (Tomlinson, 1991).

Political Influence and the Role of Social Media in Governance

Social media has become a battleground for political influence, both internally and externally. While it provides a platform for civic engagement, it also serves as a conduit for foreign political interests to shape national discourse. The 2020 #EndSARS movement exemplifies the dual role of social media in Nigerian political life. On one hand, it enabled youth-led activism and mobilization, amplifying voices against police brutality; on the other, it exposed Nigeria to external political influences, with foreign organizations, celebrities, and political figures intervening in local governance issues (Chiluwa & Ifukor, 2021). The ability of global platforms to shape political narratives in Nigeria underscores their power in directing national consciousness, sometimes to the detriment of national sovereignty. Western social media companies exert control over digital political discourse by regulating content through opaque censorship policies that often favor Western ideological positions (Hintz, Dencik, & Wahl-Jorgensen, 2019). The deplatforming of individuals or groups whose views do not align with Western liberal democratic ideals reflects a digital form of political gatekeeping that undermines the plurality of political thought within Nigeria's democratic space. This raises concerns about digital imperialism, where control over online expression is wielded by foreign corporations rather than local institutions (Zuboff, 2019).

Economic Dependence and the Digital Economy

The economic ramifications of social media within Nigeria extend beyond mere cultural and political influences; they also manifest in structural economic dependencies. Social media platforms serve as vital economic tools for digital entrepreneurship, but they are ultimately controlled by Western corporations that extract value from Nigerian digital labor without equitable compensation. For instance, content creators and digital marketers in Nigeria contribute significantly to global social media ecosystems, yet the financial benefits are disproportionately accrued by platform owners headquartered in the United States and Europe (Fuchs, 2014). The reliance on Western digital advertising networks means that local businesses must pay foreign companies to reach Nigerian audiences, leading to capital flight rather than domestic economic retention (Obi, 2021). The financialization of user data further compounds this issue, as Nigerian users generate vast amounts of valuable data that are harvested and monetized by these corporations without direct economic benefits to local communities (Couldry & Mejias, 2019). The lack of indigenous social media alternatives cements Nigeria's position as a digital consumer rather than a producer, reinforcing economic dependencies reminiscent of colonial-era trade structures.

Summary of Findings

This study has examined the relationship between globalization and social media, positioning the latter as a key instrument of modern imperialism in Nigeria. The findings reveal that social media as an extension of globalization has significantly influenced various socio-political and cultural dimensions in Nigeria. While it offers unparalleled opportunities for communication, information dissemination, and social mobilization, it simultaneously reinforces global hegemonies that shape national narratives, economic structures, and cultural identities. One of the critical findings is that social media platforms function as both enablers of free expression and tools of ideological control. These platforms provide Nigerian

citizens with a voice in governance, activism, and economic participation, yet they remain largely controlled by Western corporations, which dictate content policies, data regulation, and algorithmic visibility. This imbalance perpetuates digital colonialism, where Nigerian users contribute to global conversations but remain subject to external content governance (Couldry & Mejias, 2019). The study underscores the profound impact of social media on Nigeria's political landscape. Social networking sites like Twitter, Facebook, and WhatsApp have been instrumental in political mobilization, electioneering, and activism, as evidenced by movements like #EndSARS. However, the research also highlights how these platforms have been weaponized for misinformation, vote-buying, and political propaganda, thus complicating democratic processes (Howard & Bradshaw, 2018).

Economically, the study finds that while social media has created avenues for digital entrepreneurship and e-commerce, it has also exposed Nigerian businesses to exploitative market dynamics dominated by foreign digital monopolies. The reliance on platforms like Instagram, Facebook Marketplace, and YouTube for business visibility places Nigerian entrepreneurs at the mercy of fluctuating algorithmic preferences and monetization policies controlled by foreign entities (Zuboff, 2019). Culturally, the research reveals that social media has facilitated the hybridization of local and global cultures. While it serves as a medium for promoting indigenous Nigerian identities, languages, and traditions, it simultaneously accelerates cultural homogenization, often favoring Western norms over indigenous expressions. The infiltration of foreign media content through platforms such as TikTok and Netflix has contributed to shifts in cultural values, fashion, and entertainment, leading to concerns about cultural erosion (Eze, 2021).

The findings also indicate that social media plays a significant role in shaping public discourse on globalization. It allows Nigerians to engage in global conversations about economic policies, human rights, and social justice, yet the dominance of Western media conglomerates in shaping online narratives means that local perspectives are often marginalized. This aligns with the theory of media imperialism, which posits that information flows are disproportionately controlled by a few dominant players (Boyd-Barrett, 2015). The study highlights the role of social media in education and knowledge dissemination. Platforms like YouTube and LinkedIn have provided Nigerians with access to global learning resources, professional networking, and digital skills development. However, the unequal distribution of digital infrastructure and high internet costs remain significant barriers to equitable access, reinforcing existing socio-economic disparities (UNESCO, 2020).

Conclusion

This study has critically examined the intersection between globalisation, social media, and modern imperialism in Nigeria, highlighting how digital platforms serve as conduits for Western cultural dominance. Social media as a byproduct of globalisation, has significantly shaped Nigerian cultural landscapes by influencing identity formation, language use, entertainment consumption, and societal norms. Through algorithmic biases and Western-centric digital infrastructures, Nigerian indigenous traditions face both erosion and transformation, with local content often marginalised in favor of dominant Western

narratives. However, the study also acknowledges the agency of Nigerian social media users in resisting cultural subjugation by leveraging digital platforms to reclaim and promote indigenous identity. Despite the overwhelming influence of Western modernity, there exists a counter-narrative where social media has been repurposed to celebrate, preserve, and globalise Nigerian traditions. Thus, while globalization —through social media—functions as a tool of modern imperialism, it equally presents opportunities for cultural revival and redefinition. The findings underscore the paradox of digital influence: a space where cultural erasure and preservation coexist in a constant struggle for representation.

Recommendations

In light of the findings this study proposes the following recommendations to mitigate the adverse effects of modern imperialism through social media while maximising its potential for cultural sustainability in Nigeria:

1. **Algorithmic Fairness and Local Content Promotion:** Social media platforms should implement policies that ensure algorithmic inclusivity by prioritising and promoting indigenous Nigerian content. Local creators and policymakers must advocate for algorithmic transparency to reduce Western dominance in content visibility.

2. **Cultural Digital Activism:** Nigerian content creators, scholars, and policymakers should actively engage in cultural digital activism by leveraging social media to promote indigenous languages, traditions, and histories. National cultural institutions must initiate digital campaigns to amplify Nigerian heritage globally.

3. **Media Literacy and Cultural Awareness Programs:** The Nigerian government, educational institutions, and civil society organisations should integrate media literacy programs into the educational curriculum. This will equip citizens—especially young people—with the critical skills to navigate social media without uncritically assimilating foreign cultural values.

4. **Legislative and Policy Interventions:** The Nigerian government should formulate digital policies that protect local content creators from Western corporate dominance. Policies should incentivise homegrown social media platforms that prioritise Nigerian cultural representation.

5. **Strategic Use of Social Media for Cultural Branding:** Nigerian influencers, media houses, and policymakers should intentionally brand Nigeria's cultural heritage on global platforms. This includes increasing investment in Nollywood, Afrobeats, indigenous literature, and other creative sectors to strengthen Nigeria's soft power in the global digital space.

6. **Academic and Policy-driven Research:** There is a need for continuous academic research on the evolving dynamics of digital imperialism and its implications for Nigerian cultural identity. Such research should inform government policies and media regulations to ensure cultural preservation in the digital era.

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