



Digital Activism and Citizen Journalism in Nigeria: An Analysis of Patterns and Socio-Political Implications in the Obidient Movement

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Abstract

Original Research Article

This study examines the intersection of digital activism, citizen journalism, and public sphere discourse within Nigeria’s contemporary political landscape, using the Obidient Movement during the 2023 general elections as a focal case. The rapid expansion of digital communication technologies has significantly transformed political participation by decentralising information production, amplifying citizen voices, and enabling new forms of engagement beyond traditional media structures. Against the backdrop of declining trust in political institutions and mainstream media, this study investigates how digitally mediated communication reshaped patterns of mobilisation, narrative construction, and civic participation in Nigeria. Anchored on New Media Theory and Public Sphere Theory, the study adopts a qualitative research design within an interpretive paradigm. Data were drawn from approximately 500 digital artefacts, including social media posts, images, videos, hashtags, and online discussions across platforms such as X (formerly Twitter), Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp. In addition, semi-structured interviews were conducted with selected participants, and relevant newspaper reports were analysed to provide contextual depth. The data were analysed using thematic and discourse analytical techniques. The findings reveal that digital activism within the Obidient Movement was characterised by structured and strategic patterns of engagement, including hashtag coordination, visual storytelling, real-time citizen reporting, counter-narrative construction, and decentralised participation. Citizen journalism emerged as a powerful force in shaping political narratives, providing alternative perspectives, and challenging the dominance of traditional media. The study further finds that digital mobilisation significantly enhanced political participation, particularly among youth, and contributed to the democratisation of the media space. However, the study also identifies critical challenges associated with digital engagement, including the proliferation of misinformation, issues of credibility, and increased ideological polarisation within the digital public sphere. These dynamics highlight the dual nature of digital media as both empowering and potentially disruptive to democratic processes. The study concludes that while digital platforms expand opportunities for civic engagement and inclusive participation, they also require critical attention in terms of regulation, media literacy, and ethical communication practices. It recommends the promotion of digital literacy, responsible digital activism, and balanced policy frameworks to strengthen democratic consolidation in Nigeria.

Keywords: Digital activism, Citizen Journalism, Public sphere discourse, Obidient Movement, Political participation, Digital mobilisation, Media credibility, Youth engagement.

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Introduction

The rapid evolution of communication technologies in the 21st century has fundamentally transformed the nature of political engagement, information dissemination, and public discourse across the globe. Historically, political communication was largely centralised, dominated by state institutions, political elites, and traditional media organisations such as newspapers, radio, and television. These institutions functioned as gatekeepers, controlling the production, framing, and distribution of information to the public (Habermas, 1989). As a result, citizens were often positioned as passive recipients of information rather than active participants in political processes.

However, the emergence and proliferation of digital media technologies have disrupted this traditional communication order. The rise of the internet, mobile communication devices, and social networking platforms has facilitated the decentralisation of information flows, enabling individuals to produce, share, and consume content with unprecedented ease and speed (Castells, 2012). This shift has redefined the dynamics of political communication, transforming citizens from passive audiences into active agents of information production and dissemination.

In contemporary societies, digital platforms such as Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), Instagram, WhatsApp, and TikTok have become central to political engagement and civic participation. These platforms serve not only as channels for information exchange but also as interactive spaces where individuals and groups construct identities, mobilise support, and contest power relations (Papacharissi, 2015). The interactive and participatory nature of digital media has given rise to new forms of engagement that transcend geographical, social, and institutional boundaries.

Within this evolving communication landscape, digital activism has emerged as a significant phenomenon. Digital activism refers to the use of digital technologies to promote social, political,

or economic change. It encompasses a wide range of activities, including online campaigns, hashtag movements, digital protests, and virtual advocacy (Tufekci, 2017). Unlike traditional forms of activism, which often rely on physical gatherings and formal organisational structures, digital activism is characterised by decentralisation, flexibility, and networked participation (Bennett & Segerberg, 2013). It enables individuals to engage in collective action without the need for formal membership or hierarchical coordination.

Closely intertwined with digital activism is the concept of citizen journalism. Citizen journalism represents a paradigm shift in the production and dissemination of news and information. Traditionally, journalism was the exclusive domain of trained professionals working within established media institutions. However, the advent of digital technologies has blurred the boundaries between professional and amateur journalism, allowing ordinary citizens to perform journalistic functions such as reporting, documenting events, and providing commentary (Jenkins, 2006). Through the use of smartphones and social media platforms, individuals can capture and share real-time information, often bypassing traditional media gatekeepers (Allan, 2013).

The rise of citizen journalism has significant implications for the media landscape. On one hand, it enhances inclusivity and diversity by providing a platform for voices that are often marginalised in mainstream media. It also contributes to greater transparency and accountability by exposing issues that may be overlooked or underreported by traditional media organisations (Mutsaers, 2016). On the other hand, it raises concerns about credibility, accuracy, and ethical standards, as citizen-generated content may not always adhere to established journalistic principles (Ojebuyi & Salawu, 2021).

These developments have profound implications for the concept of the public sphere. The public sphere, as originally conceptualised, refers to a space where citizens engage in rational-critical debate about matters of common interest

(Habermas, 1989). In the digital age, this space has expanded beyond physical and institutional boundaries to include online platforms where discourse is continuous, dynamic, and often fragmented (Fraser, 1990). Digital media have transformed the public sphere into a networked environment characterised by multiple, overlapping discourses rather than a single, unified space (Papacharissi, 2015).

In Nigeria, the impact of digital media on political communication has been particularly significant. As one of Africa's largest democracies, Nigeria has experienced a growing reliance on digital platforms for political engagement, especially among its youthful population. The increasing accessibility of smartphones and internet connectivity has facilitated the emergence of digitally mediated political movements that challenge traditional power structures (Ndlela & Mano, 2020).

Notable examples of digital activism in Nigeria include movements such as #OccupyNigeria, #BringBackOurGirls, and #EndSARS. These movements demonstrated the capacity of digital platforms to mobilise large numbers of people, both online and offline, and to influence national and international discourse (Tufekci, 2017). They also highlighted the role of citizen journalism in documenting events, shaping narratives, and holding authorities accountable (Mutsvairo, 2016).

The Obidient Movement represents a continuation and evolution of these trends within the context of electoral politics. Emerging during the 2023 Nigerian general elections, the movement was largely driven by young people and characterised by its strong digital presence. Unlike traditional political campaigns that rely heavily on party structures, financial resources, and elite networks, the Obidient Movement leveraged digital platforms to mobilise support, disseminate information, and coordinate activities.

One of the defining features of the movement was its reliance on volunteer-driven engagement and user-generated content. Supporters actively participated in creating and sharing political messages, producing campaign materials, and

engaging in online debates. This participatory approach reflects a shift towards a more inclusive and decentralised model of political communication (Bennett & Segerberg, 2013).

At the same time, the movement also exposed some of the challenges associated with digital activism and citizen journalism. The rapid spread of information on digital platforms created opportunities for misinformation and disinformation, while the highly polarised nature of online discourse contributed to ideological divisions (Ojebuyi & Salawu, 2021). These dynamics underscore the dual nature of digital media as both empowering and disruptive.

Despite the growing body of research on digital activism and citizen journalism, there remains a need for context-specific studies that examine how these phenomena operate within particular socio-political environments. In the Nigerian context, much of the existing literature has focused on earlier movements, with limited attention given to recent developments such as the Obidient Movement.

This study seeks to address this gap by providing an in-depth analysis of the patterns and approaches of digital activism and citizen journalism within the movement. It also examines how these practices shape public sphere discourse and influence political participation in Nigeria. By doing so, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of the evolving relationship between digital media, civic engagement, and democratic processes.

In essence, this research is situated at the intersection of communication, politics, and technology. It recognises that digital media are not merely tools of communication but active agents in shaping social realities, power relations, and democratic practices. As such, the study provides valuable insights into the opportunities and challenges associated with the digital transformation of political communication in Nigeria.

Literature Review

The literature on digital activism, citizen journalism, and public sphere discourse has

expanded significantly in recent decades, reflecting the growing influence of digital technologies on communication processes and democratic engagement. Scholars across communication, media studies, and political science have examined how digital platforms are reshaping the ways in which citizens participate in public life, produce information, and engage in political discourse.

Digital Activism in the Networked Society

Digital activism has emerged as a defining feature of contemporary political engagement, particularly within the context of what Manuel Castells describes as the “network society.” In this context, power is increasingly organised through networks enabled by digital communication technologies, allowing for decentralised forms of mobilisation and engagement (Castells, 2012).

Scholars argue that digital activism represents a shift from traditional collective action to what W. Lance Bennett and Alexandra Segerberg conceptualise as “connective action.” Unlike conventional activism, which relies on hierarchical organisational structures, connective action is characterised by personalised content sharing and loosely organised participation (Bennett & Segerberg, 2013). Digital platforms enable individuals to engage in political processes without formal membership, thereby lowering barriers to participation.

The accessibility and flexibility of digital activism have contributed to its widespread adoption, particularly among younger demographics. Digital platforms provide opportunities for rapid mobilisation, real-time communication, and global visibility (Tufekci, 2017). These affordances have made digital activism a powerful tool for influencing public discourse and shaping political outcomes.

However, the literature also highlights several limitations. Critics argue that digital activism can lead to “slacktivism,” where engagement is limited to low-effort online activities that may not translate into meaningful offline action (Morozov, 2011). Additionally, algorithm-driven

content distribution can create visibility biases, privileging certain narratives over others (Papacharissi, 2015).

Furthermore, the spread of misinformation and disinformation poses significant challenges. The speed and reach of digital platforms often outpace verification mechanisms, leading to the circulation of false information that can distort public discourse (Ojebuyi & Salawu, 2021). Despite these concerns, digital activism remains a critical component of contemporary democratic engagement.

Citizen Journalism and the Transformation of Media Practices

Citizen journalism has fundamentally altered the landscape of news production and dissemination. Traditionally, journalism was the domain of professional practitioners operating within institutional frameworks governed by established norms and ethical standards. However, the advent of digital technologies has disrupted this model, enabling ordinary individuals to participate in journalistic practices (Jenkins, 2006).

According to Stuart Allan, citizen journalism involves the active participation of non-professionals in the collection, reporting, and dissemination of news (Allan, 2013). Through the use of smartphones and digital platforms, individuals can document events and share information in real time, often bypassing traditional media gatekeepers.

One of the key strengths of citizen journalism lies in its ability to provide alternative perspectives. It amplifies voices that are often marginalised in mainstream media and contributes to a more pluralistic media environment (Mutsvairo, 2016). In contexts where traditional media may be constrained by political or economic pressures, citizen journalism serves as an important mechanism for accountability and transparency.

In Nigeria, citizen journalism has played a significant role in shaping public discourse, particularly during periods of social and political unrest. The #EndSARS movement, for instance,

demonstrated how citizen-generated content could influence both national and international narratives (Ndlela & Mano, 2020).

However, the rise of citizen journalism also presents challenges. The lack of professional training and editorial oversight raises concerns about accuracy, verification, and ethical standards (Ojebuyi & Salawu, 2021). The blurring of boundaries between professional and amateur journalism complicates issues of credibility and trust, making it necessary to develop frameworks that ensure responsible information dissemination.

The Public Sphere in the Digital Age

The concept of the public sphere, as developed by Jürgen Habermas, remains central to understanding democratic communication. Habermas (1989) conceptualises the public sphere as a space where citizens engage in rational-critical debate about matters of common interest.

In the digital age, the public sphere has undergone significant transformation. Digital platforms have expanded the scope of public discourse, enabling broader participation and interaction (Fraser, 1990). However, this expansion has also led to fragmentation, as multiple discourses coexist within networked environments.

Scholars such as Zizi Papacharissi argue that the digital public sphere is characterised by “affective publics,” where emotions play a central role in shaping discourse (Papacharissi, 2015). Unlike traditional models that emphasise rational debate, digital communication often involves emotional expression, which can influence engagement and participation.

Additionally, algorithmic structures within digital platforms contribute to the formation of echo chambers, where individuals are exposed primarily to information that aligns with their existing beliefs. This can lead to polarisation and reduce the diversity of perspectives within the public sphere (Sunstein, 2017).

Despite these challenges, the digital public sphere offers opportunities for inclusive

participation and democratic engagement. It allows citizens to engage with political issues, share perspectives, and hold authorities accountable in ways that were not possible in traditional media environments.

Digital Activism and Political Participation in Nigeria

Nigeria provides a compelling context for examining digital activism and political participation. The country’s large youth population and increasing internet penetration have contributed to the growth of digitally mediated political engagement.

Digital activism in Nigeria has been evident in movements such as #OccupyNigeria, #BringBackOurGirls, and #EndSARS. These movements illustrate the capacity of digital platforms to mobilise citizens, shape public discourse, and influence political outcomes (Tufekci, 2017).

Citizen journalism has played a crucial role in these movements by documenting events and providing alternative narratives. This has contributed to greater transparency and accountability, while also challenging traditional media institutions (Ndlela & Mano, 2020).

However, the Nigerian digital space is also characterised by challenges such as misinformation, political manipulation, and regulatory constraints. Government attempts to regulate digital platforms have raised concerns about freedom of expression and censorship.

The Obidient Movement represents a new phase in the evolution of digital activism in Nigeria. Unlike previous movements, which focused on specific issues, this movement was centred on electoral participation and political transformation. It highlights the increasing role of digital platforms in shaping political engagement and discourse.

Patterns and Approaches in Digital Engagement

The literature identifies several recurring patterns in digital engagement. Hashtag activism is one of the most prominent, serving as a tool

for coordination, visibility, and identity formation (Bennett & Segerberg, 2013).

Visual communication is another key feature, with images and videos playing a central role in shaping narratives and engaging audiences (Jenkins, 2006). Narrative framing is also important, as it influences how issues are perceived and understood.

Networked mobilisation emphasises decentralisation and flexibility, allowing individuals to participate in various ways. These patterns are particularly relevant in understanding the dynamics of contemporary digital movements.

Despite the extensive body of research on digital activism and citizen journalism, several gaps remain. Much of the literature focuses on global contexts, with limited attention to local dynamics in countries like Nigeria.

Additionally, there is a lack of integrated studies that examine the intersection of digital activism, citizen journalism, and public sphere discourse. This study addresses these gaps by providing a comprehensive analysis within the context of the Obidient Movement.

The reviewed literature demonstrates that digital technologies have transformed political communication, enabling new forms of engagement and participation. While digital activism and citizen journalism enhance inclusivity and representation, they also introduce challenges such as misinformation and polarisation.

This study builds on existing scholarship by offering a context-specific analysis that contributes to a deeper understanding of digital media and democratic processes in Nigeria.

Research Questions

1. What are the dominant patterns and approaches employed by citizen journalists and digital activists within the Obidient Movement?
2. What are the socio-political implications of digital mobilisation for democratic

consolidation, youth engagement, and media credibility in Nigeria?

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research design to examine the patterns and approaches of digital activism and citizen journalism, as well as their socio-political implications within the Obidient Movement in Nigeria. The qualitative approach is appropriate for this study because it enables an in-depth exploration of meanings, interpretations, and communicative practices within digitally mediated environments. It allows the researcher to capture the complexity of online political engagement and the ways in which participants construct and negotiate discourse within the digital public sphere.

The study is anchored within an interpretive research paradigm, which assumes that social reality is constructed through interaction, communication, and shared meanings. This paradigm aligns with the study's objective of understanding how digital actors—particularly citizen journalists and activists—produce, circulate, and contest political narratives within the Nigerian digital space.

A case study approach was employed, focusing specifically on the Obidient Movement during the 2023 Nigerian general elections. The case study method is particularly suitable for examining contemporary phenomena within real-life contexts, especially where the boundaries between the phenomenon and context are not clearly defined. The Obidient Movement provides a relevant and illustrative case of digitally driven political mobilisation, characterised by decentralised participation and extensive use of social media platforms.

The population of the study consists of social media users, digital activists, citizen journalists, and media practitioners who actively participated in or engaged with the Obidient Movement. In addition, the study includes digital artefacts generated during the movement, such as social media posts, images, videos, hashtags, and online discussions. These artefacts serve as primary units of analysis, as they reflect real-

time expressions of political engagement and discourse.

A purposive sampling technique was employed to select relevant participants and digital content. This approach allows for the selection of information-rich cases that are directly related to the research objectives. The sampling criteria included relevance to the Obidient Movement, level of engagement (such as likes, shares, and comments), and thematic significance. Through this process, approximately 500 digital artefacts were selected across major platforms including X (formerly Twitter), Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp. In addition, a small number of key informants were selected for interviews based on their active involvement in digital activism and citizen journalism.

Data collection was carried out using multiple methods to ensure triangulation and enhance the credibility of the study. These methods included digital content collection, semi-structured interviews, and newspaper content analysis. Digital artefacts were systematically gathered and archived based on their relevance to the study. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with selected participants to gain deeper insights into their experiences, motivations, and perspectives. Newspaper reports were also analysed to provide contextual understanding and to compare mainstream media narratives with citizen-generated content.

Data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis and media discourse analysis. Thematic analysis involved identifying recurring patterns, themes, and categories within the data,

particularly in relation to patterns of engagement and socio-political implications. Media discourse analysis was used to examine how language, symbols, and narratives were employed in constructing political meaning within the digital public sphere. This approach enabled the study to move beyond surface-level description to a deeper interpretation of communicative practices and ideological framing.

To ensure the credibility and dependability of the findings, the study employed strategies such as data triangulation, consistency checks, and careful documentation of the analytical process. The use of multiple data sources digital artefacts, interviews, and newspaper reports enhanced the robustness of the findings and reduced the risk of bias.

Ethical considerations were strictly observed throughout the study. Participants were informed about the purpose of the research, and their consent was obtained prior to interviews. Anonymity and confidentiality were maintained, and digital data were used responsibly in line with ethical standards for research involving online content.

Overall, the methodological approach adopted in this study provides a comprehensive framework for analysing the intersection of digital activism, citizen journalism, and public sphere discourse within the context of the Obidient Movement. It enables a nuanced understanding of how digital communication practices shape political engagement and democratic processes in Nigeria.

Results

Research Questions 3: What are the dominant patterns and approaches employed by citizen journalists and digital activists within the Obidient Movement?

Table 1: Themes, Illustrative Evidence, and Interpretation for Research Question 3

Theme	Illustrative Evidence from Texts	Interpretation (What the Theme Reveals About Digital Activism)
1. Hashtag Activism and Digital Mobilisation	Frequent use of hashtags such as #ObidientMovement, coordinated campaign posts, and viral tweet threads mobilising support across platforms like Twitter and Facebook.	Hashtags functioned as organising tools that unified participants and amplified visibility. They enabled decentralised mobilisation and created a shared digital identity among supporters.
2. Visual Storytelling and Multimedia Engagement	Use of memes, campaign graphics, short videos, and edited clips portraying political messages and rally moments.	Visual content enhanced emotional appeal and audience engagement. It simplified complex political ideas and increased the reach of campaign narratives, especially among younger audiences.
3. Real-Time Citizen Reporting	Live tweets from polling units, user-generated election updates, and video documentation of voting processes and irregularities.	Citizen journalism played a watchdog role by providing immediate, on-the-ground information. This strengthened transparency and reduced dependence on traditional media reporting.
4. Counter-Narrative Construction	Posts challenging mainstream media reports, fact-check threads, and alternative interpretations of political events.	Digital activists actively resisted dominant political narratives by introducing alternative viewpoints, thereby reshaping public discourse and promoting pluralism.

5. Decentralised Participation and Networked Engagement	Absence of central leadership; widespread participation by individuals sharing content independently across platforms.	The movement operated as a network rather than a hierarchy, allowing for inclusive participation and flexible engagement, consistent with connective action theory.
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Research Question 4: What are the socio-political implications of digital mobilisation for democratic consolidation, youth engagement, and media credibility in Nigeria?

Table 2: Themes, Illustrative Evidence, and Interpretation for Research Question 4

Theme	Illustrative Evidence from Texts	Interpretation (What the Theme Reveals About Socio-Political Impact)
1. Increased Youth Political Engagement	High volume of youth-driven posts, online campaign participation, and digital advocacy discussions across platforms.	Digital platforms significantly lowered barriers to participation, leading to increased political awareness and engagement among young people in Nigeria.
2. Democratisation of Media Space	Citizen-generated content competing with traditional media reports; widespread sharing of independent political updates.	Digital mobilisation reduced the monopoly of traditional media, allowing citizens to become active producers of information and contributors to public discourse.
3. Enhanced Political Awareness and Civic Participation	Informational threads explaining voting processes, civic responsibilities, and election updates.	Digital activism contributed to political education, empowering citizens with knowledge and encouraging

		more informed participation in democratic processes.
4. Polarisation and Ideological Conflict	Heated debates, opposing political narratives, and emotionally charged exchanges among users.	While digital platforms increased participation, they also intensified political divisions, leading to fragmented discourse within the public sphere.
5. Misinformation and Credibility Challenges	Circulation of unverified claims, conflicting reports, and correction threads attempting to debunk false information.	The absence of gatekeeping mechanisms enabled the spread of misinformation, raising concerns about media credibility and the reliability of citizen-generated content.

Discussion of Findings

This section interprets the findings of the study in relation to the research questions, existing literature, and theoretical framework. The discussion is structured around the key themes identified in the analysis, focusing on the patterns of digital activism and citizen journalism, as well as their socio-political implications within the Nigerian context.

Patterns of Digital Activism and Citizen Journalism (Research Question 3)

The findings reveal that digital activism within the Obidient Movement was characterised by structured and strategic patterns of engagement, including hashtag activism, visual storytelling, real-time reporting, counter-narrative construction, and decentralised participation. These patterns demonstrate that digital engagement was not merely spontaneous but followed identifiable communication logics.

The prominence of hashtag activism supports the notion of “connective action” as proposed by W.

Lance Bennett and Alexandra Segerberg, where individuals participate in collective action through personalised content sharing rather than formal organisational structures. Hashtags functioned as digital anchors that facilitated coordination, visibility, and identity formation within the movement. This aligns with earlier studies which argue that hashtags serve as organising mechanisms in digitally mediated activism.

Similarly, the use of visual storytelling and emotional framing reflects what Zizi Papacharissi describes as “affective publics,” where emotions play a central role in shaping political engagement. The findings show that images, memes, and videos were not only tools of communication but also instruments for mobilising emotional responses, thereby strengthening collective identity and participation.

The emergence of citizen journalism as a dominant feature of the movement highlights the transformation of media practices in the digital age. Consistent with the works of Stuart Allan,

the study demonstrates that ordinary citizens assumed journalistic roles by producing and disseminating information in real time. This development challenges traditional media gatekeeping and supports the argument that digital media have decentralised news production.

Furthermore, the presence of counter-narratives indicates a shift in power dynamics within the media landscape. Digital activists actively contested dominant political narratives, offering alternative interpretations of events. This finding reinforces the idea that digital platforms enable the proliferation of multiple voices, thereby expanding the scope of public discourse.

The decentralised nature of participation observed in the study also aligns with New Media Theory, which emphasises interactivity, user-generated content, and networked communication. The absence of centralised leadership structures allowed for flexible and inclusive participation, making the movement more adaptive and resilient.

Socio-Political Implications of Digital Mobilisation (Research Question 4)

The findings further reveal that digital mobilisation has significant socio-political implications for democratic consolidation, youth engagement, and media credibility in Nigeria.

One of the most notable outcomes is the increased participation of young people in political discourse. The accessibility of digital platforms lowered barriers to entry, enabling youth to engage actively in political conversations and mobilisation efforts. This supports arguments in existing literature that digital media enhance civic engagement by providing alternative avenues for participation.

The study also highlights the democratisation of the media space, where citizens are no longer passive consumers of information but active producers. This shift challenges the dominance of traditional media institutions and aligns with New Media Theory's emphasis on participatory culture. By enabling diverse voices to contribute

to public discourse, digital platforms expand the democratic space.

However, the findings also reveal significant challenges associated with digital mobilisation. The prevalence of misinformation and unverified content raises concerns about the credibility of citizen journalism. This supports earlier studies that caution against the lack of editorial control in digital environments, which can lead to the spread of false information and undermine public trust.

Additionally, the study identifies increased polarisation within the digital public sphere. Online interactions were often characterised by opposing viewpoints and emotionally charged debates, leading to fragmented discourse. This finding resonates with critiques of the digital public sphere, which argue that algorithm-driven platforms can create echo chambers and reinforce ideological divisions.

From a theoretical perspective, these findings reflect the dual nature of digital media as both enabling and constraining democratic engagement. While digital platforms facilitate participation and inclusivity, they also introduce new challenges related to information quality, credibility, and social cohesion.

Implications for Public Sphere Discourse

The findings of this study have important implications for understanding the nature of the public sphere in the digital age. The expansion of digital platforms has transformed the public sphere into a more inclusive but also more fragmented space.

Consistent with the theory of Jürgen Habermas, the public sphere is expected to facilitate rational-critical debate. However, the findings suggest that digital discourse is often influenced by emotions, identity, and algorithmic structures. This challenges the ideal of a unified and rational public sphere.

At the same time, the study demonstrates that digital platforms provide opportunities for marginalised voices to participate in discourse, thereby enhancing inclusivity. This supports contemporary revisions of public sphere theory

that recognise the existence of multiple, overlapping publics.

Overall, the discussion highlights that digital activism and citizen journalism within the Obidient Movement represent a significant shift in political communication in Nigeria. The identified patterns of engagement reflect the influence of networked communication and participatory media practices.

While digital mobilisation has enhanced political participation and expanded the public sphere, it has also introduced challenges such as misinformation and polarisation. These findings underscore the need for a balanced understanding of digital media as both empowering and disruptive forces within democratic processes.

Conclusion

This study examined the patterns and approaches of digital activism and citizen journalism within the Obidient Movement, as well as their socio-political implications for democratic engagement in Nigeria. Drawing on qualitative analysis of digital artefacts, interviews, and media content, the study provides empirical insight into how digitally mediated communication is reshaping political participation and public discourse.

The findings demonstrate that digital activism within the Obidient Movement was characterised by structured and strategic patterns of engagement, including hashtag coordination, visual storytelling, real-time reporting, and decentralised participation. These patterns reflect a shift from traditional, hierarchical models of political mobilisation to more networked and participatory forms of engagement. Citizen journalism emerged as a critical component of this transformation, enabling individuals to act as information producers, document events, and challenge dominant media narratives.

In terms of socio-political implications, the study reveals that digital mobilisation has significantly enhanced political participation, particularly among young people. By lowering barriers to

engagement, digital platforms have expanded opportunities for civic involvement and contributed to increased political awareness. At the same time, the study highlights the democratisation of the media space, where citizens play an active role in shaping public discourse.

However, the study also identifies important challenges associated with digital engagement. The prevalence of misinformation, the absence of effective gatekeeping mechanisms, and the rise of ideological polarisation raise concerns about the quality and credibility of discourse within the digital public sphere. These challenges underscore the complex and dual nature of digital media as both empowering and potentially disruptive to democratic processes.

Overall, the study concludes that digital activism and citizen journalism are redefining the contours of political communication in Nigeria. While they offer significant opportunities for enhancing democratic participation and inclusivity, they also necessitate critical attention to issues of regulation, media literacy, and information integrity. Understanding these dynamics is essential for harnessing the potential of digital media in strengthening democratic governance in Nigeria and similar contexts.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study on digital activism, citizen journalism, and public sphere discourse within the Obidient Movement, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. There is a need for enhanced media literacy programmes in Nigeria. Given the prevalence of misinformation and unverified content in digital spaces, citizens should be equipped with critical skills to evaluate information, verify sources, and engage responsibly in online discourse. This will improve the quality of participation and strengthen trust in digital communication.

2. media organisations should adopt hybrid models that integrate citizen journalism into professional reporting frameworks. Traditional media institutions can leverage user-generated content while maintaining editorial standards, verification processes, and ethical guidelines. This will help bridge the gap between professional journalism and participatory media practices.
3. Policy makers and regulatory bodies should develop balanced digital governance frameworks. Such frameworks should protect freedom of expression while addressing the spread of misinformation and harmful content. Overregulation should be avoided to prevent the suppression of legitimate civic engagement, but clear guidelines are necessary to ensure accountability.
4. There is a need to encourage responsible digital activism through civic education and stakeholder engagement. Civil society organisations, educational institutions, and advocacy groups should promote ethical standards in digital participation, emphasising accuracy, inclusivity, and constructive dialogue.
5. Efforts should be made to promote inclusive digital access, particularly for marginalised groups. Expanding access to affordable internet services and digital tools will ensure broader participation in the digital public sphere and prevent the exclusion of certain populations from political engagement.
6. Future research should explore the long-term impact of digital activism on democratic consolidation in Nigeria. Quantitative and mixed-method approaches could provide additional insights into the sustainability, effectiveness, and broader implications of digitally mediated political participation.

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