Use of Digital Space to Amplify the Voice of Minority Groups in Nigeria

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Abstract

The disparity between the majority and minority groupings is a reality of all human societies or states. The digital media space has largely democratised the way and speed of communication, narrowing the gap between the majorities and the minorities. This survey study found that minorities, indeed, could have a say. The study objective was to determine how much digital media has amplified minority voices in Nigeria. Notwithstanding, the primary data was collected through the probabilistic survey with a questionnaire administered both online and physically. Data analysis concluded that digital media has extended communication access to minority groups. The Muted group and co-cultural theories that provided the theoretical framework for this study equally established the existence of minority groups who would always want to seek a medium of communication they found sympathetic or favourable to their course. In conclusion, study findings indicate a challenge in the skill level for minorities to take maximum benefit from the opportunities afforded them by the digital media space. The study

recommends that the government and those in authority deliberately provide digital infrastructures, training, and a conducive environment to empower minority groups to seamlessly participate in cyberspace, which is a right, not a privilege.

Keywords: Digital Participation, Digital Space, Minority Groups, Nigeria, Social Media

Introduction

Arguably, the most impactful communication technology since after the Gutenberg printing press has been the digital technology that started in the mid to late 1940s. The evolution of digital technology assumed a revolution dimension in the 1980s (Rousseau, 2023). That was when its precursor analog technology faced extinction. According to Barsal and Mehtre (2019), digital technology could be synonymous with computer technology that entails the generation, processing, and storage of data using two binary figures - positive numbers represented by one (1) and non-positive numbers represented by zero (0). Data are stored or processed in bits of 1s and 0s in a string called a byte.

In their further insight, scholars like Pugliese and Vesper (2022) submit that digital technology is a versatile infrastructure that provides choices for interface among devices and platforms. It is highly dynamic, allowing users to adapt to their changing needs. Arguments could be made that the advances made with the Internet and energy-efficient computing technology leapfrogged the possibilities with digital technologies, especially with the improvement made with the Internet from the 1960s through the 70s. Nwachukwu and Hieu (2021) observed the initial cautious application of digital technology by military formations and government offices. However, the scholars opined on its massive application because of advancements made through the late 80s and how it has aided the creation and transmission of digital images, video coding

formats, audio compression standards, and digital music and television. And that was the birth of the digital revolution age! The digital age brought about technological possibilities such as virtual reality and gaming, blogging, document distribution, mobile telephony, smartphones, and intelligent screen television. Commenting on these technological advancements, Clarke (2012) argues that the digital revolution was over. The wheel has spun, and we are in a profoundly different era than we were a few decades ago (Clarke, 2012, p.3).

Many superlatives were formed, and concepts were postulated to describe the information and communication possibilities aided by digital technologies. At least three relevant concepts to this investigation include digital space, digital divide, and digital literacy. For instance, Owolabi (2021) conceives digital spaces as the display of information using the screen of a digital gadget, such as computer desktops, laptops, tablets, smartphones, and calculators, among others. Various materials may be shown in several ways in a digital setting. Such materials could include movies, photos, and the website itself. Nevertheless, beyond these physical items, digital space could also be argued as entailing the ability to manoeuvre the Internet to access information through physical gadgets as channels.

Relatedly, Spires, Paul, and Kirkhoff (2018) consider digital literacy the 'ability to understand and use information in multiple formats from various sources when presented via computers.' The scholars further submit that digital literacy has three components: locating, consuming, creating, and communicating with digital content. Each of these comes with specific competencies, abilities, and skills. Deficiency in those skills determines the ability to operate within the digital space. Hence, the term digital divide explains which side of the space, within or without, one uses. For instance, Spires et al. (2018) submit that learners must develop evaluative dispositions and discerning mindsets as they

navigate digital content to interact with online resources accurately. Additionally, without critical evaluation, the learner may easily be directed by the technology rather than the learner leading the inquiry.

It is submitted that the absence of these capabilities automatically shuts one out of the digital space and its many applications, such as e-governance, e-voting, e-commerce where billions of naira worth of services and goods are traded, e-banking where account opening with other payment possibilities are transacted daily. Notwithstanding the pervasiveness of these technologies, many Nigerians lack the needed skills. Yet, policy directives are pointing to more applications of digital applications in our daily lives. Ahead of the last general elections, debates were rife on e-voting, which would have arguably either assisted or prevented some people from performing their civic obligations. In another specific instance, the Central Bank of Nigeria, in its bid to compel more Nigerians to do financial transactions using the digital space, issued memo number BSD/DIR/PUB/015/069 on December 6, 2022, which placed a weekly limit of physical cash transactions of One Hundred Thousand (N100,000) and Five Hundred Thousand (N500,000) for individual and corporate organisations respectively. The policy directive further fixed the limit for ATM cash withdrawals at Twenty Thousand (N20,000) daily. At the same time, transactions above those thresholds are moved to digital platforms such as e-naira, internet banking, and point-of-sales transactions, among other possibilities.

Notwithstanding that Nigeria has one of the highest internet accesses in Africa, online presence is still limited to just above half of the population or 50.2 percent, according to Enwonwu et al. (2023) in their study on access to digital technology and health services. This statistic implies that barely half of the population is shut out of digital space while many of those with access may still be grappling with the required skill to make the maximum benefits of the opportunities provided in the space.

Contrarily, Trabelsi, Fersi, and Jmaiel (2023), in their study on internet access control, argued that the debate was no longer about internet access because people now live with internet-enabled smart objects or gadgets all around them, in our daily routines and that they ease the way we live our lives. Considering the importance of the capabilities of the digital space to give a platform for expression, participation in the decision-making processes, and economic empowerment, the United Nations 2014 made internet access a human right. The thirty-five-page Charter of Human Rights and Principles for the Internet intends to build awareness, understanding, and a shared platform for the Internet and open participation.

Suffice it to observe that access to digital space has expanded the possibilities of individual participation in the decision-making process. For instance, stakeholders' engagements and town hall meetings during the 2020 service-based electricity tariff review exercise in the Nigerian Electricity Supply Industry were held online using Zoom meetings, Facebook, and Google Meet, as the case may be. That was in addition to the physical town hall meetings. That process allowed more Nigerians to have a say or voice in determining the tariff for their utility services.

Relatedly, Mądra-Sawicka et al. (2020), in their essay on women empowerment, opine that digital technologies have revolutionised how we communicate by removing some barriers, including socio-economic, geographical, space, and political, among others. Digital technology, because of its open access, could give voice to citizens who may have ordinarily been shut out of the process. Additionally, it could ensure economic inclusivity and increased participation in governance. Groups hitherto considered minorities without a say in public engagement could be given voices. Nonetheless, the technology may perpetuate its version of minority groups by shutting out some individuals without the required skills for digital technology from the public space.

Against this backdrop, this investigation was conducted to find empirical explanations for this puzzle, as further elucidated in the problem statement.

Statement of the Problem

In its absolute sense, equality cannot be argued to exist anywhere. Instead, it is posited here that a state of complete equality is utopian, which modern societies strive to attain. Subsequently, the recognition of the lack of total equality would presuppose the existence of minorities. Relatedly, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner on Human Rights (2010) consented that every country or society has one form of minorities. The world body also observed the difficulty of arriving at a universally accepted definition of a minority group. It, therefore, adopted the 1977 Francesco Capotorti definition, which considers minorities as numerically inferior to the rest of a state's population. The UN definition indicates minorities are usually in a non-dominant position as nationals of their state and that their ethnic, religious, or linguistic characteristics differ from those of the rest of the population. Notably, most minority groups exhibit a sense of solidarity directed toward preserving their culture, traditions, religion, or language. Additionally, the argument is posited that one of the challenges for the minority group is that their voice is barely heard in the affairs of the state or their communities.

Notwithstanding, scholars have submitted the ability of the digital space to remove barriers obfuscating minority voices. For instance, Mądra-Sawicka et al. (2020) offer digital media to empower 7 million Taiwanese who explore opportunities daily and communicate through digital technologies. A similar study conducted in Thohoyandou, South Africa, concluded that female youth's regular access to digital media indicates a great potential for empowerment (Makanise & Madina, 2020). Similarly, in their study, Kadeswaran, Brindha, and Jayaseelan (2020) affirm that

the digital space provides a voice to minorities, empowers them, and gives them opportunities to exchange content. These studies' findings indicate that digital technologies can remove the barriers for minority groups and bring them into the mainstream. Nigeria's digital space presents an exciting scenario with 155 million or 65 percent of the 239 million projected population by the National Population Commission 2025, active on the Internet, according to the fourth quarter 2022 report by the National Bureau of Statistics and a little less than 40 million on various social media platforms.

Further to those mentioned earlier, this study sought to investigate the extent to which the digital space could provide platforms for expressing voices and empowering minority groups in Nigeria.

Objectives of the study
The objectives of the study are to:
1. investigate digital space preference among minority groups in Nigeria;
2. examine how digital space has given voice to minority groups in Nigeria;
3. discern the media channels in the digital space most suitable for projecting minority voices; and
4. Examine if minority groups in Nigeria have the needed skills to access the digital space.

Theoretical Framework
Anthropologists Shirley and Edwin Ardener propounded the muted group theory in 1975 to explain the social structure, hierarchy, and how marginalised groups, particularly women, children, and people with low incomes - those in the lower rung of the social strata are relegated. This investigation shall use the muted group communication theory for its theoretical framework. Specifically, Ardeners, in the preliminary work

on their theory, observed that the top end of the social strata determines the communication system for their culture. In that process, the lower end of the strata is relegated by the choice of words and vocabulary (West & West, 2004). The theorists specifically referenced that male clerics and academics primarily developed the English language and that certain feminine activities are labelled in the negatives. In contrast, masculine activities, even when they amount to vices, are glorified in the choice of words.

The Ardeners (1975) theorised two broad categories of people: the dominant and the dominated or minority. The dominant group creates the language for society. Three basic assumptions of the theory are that women perceive the world around them differently than men's perception of society, makes around them an air of importance or dominance, and that women or the dominant group must transform their mode of operations to suit the dominant group. The theory further listed the dominance process to include harassment, control, ridicule, and ritual, among others. It was further theorised on the point and process of resistance by the dominant or minority groups.

Notwithstanding the improvement made to the theory by scholars like Karamarae to expand the scope of muted theory beyond the feminism prism to explain minorities in about 1981, the muted theory may still fall short, especially in its assumption that women constitute the minority group. In comparison, some women, like Dr Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, Condoleezza Rice, and Queen Elizabeth II, have broken the ceiling to dominate their world and the men around them. Nonetheless, the theory shall be relevant to this study as it considers the role of language- the media, by the dominant groups and resistance by the dominated groups.

Therefore, further consideration in the theoretical framework is given to the co-cultural communication theory, which is a more recent attempt at

explaining the communication by minorities in juxtaposition with the majority groups. Riding on the shortcomings of the 1975 Ardeners' muted theory and subsequent improvement by scholars like Karamarae that birthed the standpoint theory, Orbe (1991) developed the co-cultural theory. The theory avoided denigrating words as dominant and considered the choice of representation of cultures. The context further informed the selection of the term culture of the theory as it was built on the lived experience of the minority groups in the United States. The co-cultural theory explains how the underrepresented culture uses the media to negotiate between themselves and the dominant culture. It was postulated that there are no inferior cultures, even though the European-American culture assumed a position of dominance over time.

Additionally, culture was considered from the perspective of races, ethnic groups, gender, socio-economic status, disability, and sexual orientations in the United States of America. The theory focuses on the incidences of underrepresented cultures and how they negotiate with the dominant group using the media. Five assumptions are that the dominant group creates the standard, and the underrepresented conforms; the dominant group has access to power, which they use in creating communication standards; and the dominant communication structure impedes the abilities of the dominant group.

Besides these assumptions, Orbe (1991) identified two premises that the underrepresented culture, even though they may have diverse experiences, would share similar positioning that is marginalised within the dominant structure. The other premise is that a co-cultural group would adopt specific communication orientations within the public communicative structure to confront the dominant structure.

The theory is relevant to this study to the extent that it recognises the role of communication in the struggle for identifying and projecting voices in

multicultural settings like Nigeria. The co-cultural theory also appears more liberal than the muted theory, which considers minority issues using a feminist prism.

Conceptualisation of Minority

Notwithstanding the pervasiveness of minorities in every society, as earlier alluded to in the problem statement, the concept has recently become more challenging to define. For instance, Song (2020), in an academic article on minority status and visibility, contends that minority status in the West was linked with visibility as a non-white person. Such a narrow definition has been associated with racial stigmas and discrimination. It could be opined, therefore, that the racial denotation of minorities allowed easy identification of minority groups, which subsequently fans the embers of racism. Nevertheless, the growth in the number of multiracial people and immigrants across international boundaries has complicated the definition of a minority. For a simple definition of the word, the 2023 edition, Merriam Webster's Dictionary explains minority as that part of the population identified as different from the majority and is often subjected to differential treatment.

Relatedly, Turnaman and Liu (2023) opined on the new dimension of the minority that is not about the racial and ethnic outlook of individuals. Instead, they talked about the expression of liberty and freedom as well as a plurality of the media, which has assisted with bringing attention to other dimensions of minorities, such as the transgender and non-conforming populations. Notwithstanding the United Nations in its definition, as earlier cited, relying much on tribe and ethnic nationalities, the world body also has realised that minority status cannot be decided from geographical and tribal perspectives but should be based on objective and subjective criteria. This investigation shall subsequently review previous studies relevant to the last amplification.

Media Preference Among Minority Groups

Previous studies indicate that 'people's disposition influenced their media consumption patterns. For instance, Velasquez, Montgomery, and Hall (2019), writing on social media use among the Latino population in the US, opined that minorities' expression on social media mirrors groups' identification and how pro-attitudinal selective exposure mediates the relationship between the people and their choice of media. This submission implies that the choice of media among the minority group would be determined by their perception of the media's disposition on issues that affect minorities. This submission resonates with Spagnolo's (2021) contention in a working paper on racial bias and discrimination accusations around disempowerment and discrimination against minorities, which have remained a significant issue within several contexts of traditional media of television, print, entertainment, and advertising. Specifically, she stated that mass media have tended to support the power of the dominant group by presenting to the public highly negative, emotion-evoking images of minority groups. For instance, a 2023 Mobile Telecommunication Nigeria Plc advertisement titled 'Mama na boy' attracted scathing criticism from media experts, feminist groups, and public commentators until the mobile telephony company was pressured to withdraw the advertisement and tendered a public apology. The advertisement tended to glorify the birth of a son and, by implication, declare a girl child as less critical. The scenario was the announcement of the birth of a baby boy through the MTN mobile network. There was an ecstatic mood across the village as soon as a grandma received a call from the son of the daughter-in-law's delivery of a baby boy. The messaging of ubiquitous and reliable service provision across cities and villages was lost on the unintended sex profiling the advertisement communicated, especially as women and girls are considered minorities.

While most studies on media profiling have been specific to the mainstream or traditional media, not enough studies have been conducted to investigate this dimension with the new media.

Digital Media and Amplification of Minority Voices

Scholars have submitted on the influence of certain demographic factors on people's use and consumption of social media. The above assertion was explicitly observed to be more pronounced with the minority or vulnerable population as they desire platforms to express themselves on factors for their vulnerability. For instance, Dargin, Fan, and Mostafavi (2021), in their study of vulnerable populations and social media consumption, opined that there is documented evidence in the last decade of the influence of demographic factors such as race, ethnicity, and parental educational background, among others, correlating with people's media preference and consumption. Okocha and Dapoet (2022), in their narrative review of hashtag activism during the 2017 EndSars protest in Nigeria, concluded that social media is a revolutionary communication tool to mobilise, advocate, and create awareness and call for social change. Considering their study finding, an argument could be averred that social media would be the media of preference to project minority voices, primarily attributes such as lack of gatekeeper, open access, and universality that could have ordinarily restricted access. Notwithstanding, there is a counterargument regarding certain prohibitive factors, such as media literacy and specific competencies, which could also limit minority groups' access to social media.

Minority Groups and Digital Media Channels of Choice

Scholars like Oritz et al. (2019) submit how digital media technologies have given voice to the voiceless. Specifically, the Communications for the Association for Information Systems, involving scholars from the US, United Kingdom, New Zealand, and Canada, observed in their 2018 panel report that the traditional media perpetuates marginalisation of

specific categories of individuals, especially those who are economically, socially, and politically excluded. The traditional media – print and broadcast media, though credited as having the societal function of representing the interests of every member of the society have been coopted by the power elite as they downplay the voices of the marginalised, their grievances, and their needs. It is, therefore, trite to argue that digital media, with its unique attributes, better projects minorities through mass mobilization, political activism, cyber activism, resource mobilization, and transnationalisation of indigenous movements, among other possibilities.

Notwithstanding the perceived ability of most social media channels like Facebook, X (Twitter), Instagram, WeChat, etc., to sustain their audience attention, factors peculiar to each channel that attracts their audience are rarely a subject of academic investigation. Subsequently, conclusions can hardly be made on the channels of preference among minority groups. Nonetheless, scholars have submitted that a related previous comment most likely would attract endorsement or positive reaction from members of the same group or those sympathising with the group. For instance, Boskurt, Gligor, and Hollebeek (2021), in their work on the effect of ethnicity on social media-based comments, submit on the homophily effect that comments projecting ethnic nationalities in good light would most likely attract endorsement or comments from members of the same ethnic groups. Nonetheless, homophily effects could also be argued to be available with the majority groups.

Digital Media Skill Among Minorities
Studies have identified digital media platforms with the capabilities to facilitate learning. Specifically, Elzomor, Pradhananga, and Sadri (2020) identified specific social media attributes that enable learning. The scholars identified characteristics of digital media that made it adaptable to learning, including its ease of access and facilitation of sharing,

interacting, and discussing solutions among peers and professionals. A further submission was made that those who may ordinarily be less likely to be comfortable expressing their ideas are better encouraged to share perspectives more effectively without discomfort using digital media. Relatedly, Charmaraman, Hernandez, and Hodes (2022), in their study of digital media usage among marginalised groups, observed that most previous studies had concentrated on the use of digital media among the majority population. Nonetheless, recent studies have revealed heavy exposure and capabilities among the minority population who quickly take advantage of digital technologies. Unlike the mainstream media of the 20th century, this socially networked age of the 21st century provides users opportunities to co-construct their identities in the same social and entertainment environments where they receive their commercial media programming.

Methodology

This study is a quantitative research approach that sources data through survey methodology. The study was an exploratory investigation; a questionnaire with 16 close-ended questions was administered to 400 respondents with varied backgrounds to reflect the nature of minority groups. Nonetheless, the study has a 400-sample size as representatives of the Nigerian population figure estimated at over 223 million based on the 2023 population projection by the National Population Commission. The questionnaire was administered both online and offline. The study achieved a 74.3 percent response rate of 297 respondents. The harvested data was analysed as indicated in the study findings.

Data Analysis
Table 1: Demographics Details of Respondents

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
SEX	N	%
Male	162	54.6
Female	115	38.7
No Response	20	6.7
AGE (YRS)	N	%
18 - 30	89	30
31 - 40	80	26.9
41 - 50	29	9.8
51 - 60	61	20.5
61 - 70	5	1.7
71 and above	0	
No Response	33	11.1
Total	**297**	**100**
Work Experience (Yrs)	N	%
1 – 5	47	15.8
6 – 10	86	29
11 – 15	45	15.1
16 – 20	41	13.8
21 and above	37	12.5
No response	41	13.8
Total	**297**	**100**

Source: Field Data, 2023

Table 1 indicates that 162 (54.6%) respondents are male, while 115 (38.7%) are women. Meanwhile, twenty (6.7%) respondents did not indicate their sex, as shown in the 'Response' column. The column on age demographics shows that 89 (30%) are between the ages of 18 to 30years, 80 (26.9%) of the respondents are between the ages of 31 to 40 years, 29 (9.8%) of the respondents are between the ages of 41 to 50 years, 61 (20.5%) of the respondents are between the ages of 51 to 60 years, 5 (1.7%) of the respondents are between the ages of 61 to 70 years.

Table 2: Understanding of the term "Minority Group".

S/N	Possible Definitions of Minority Groups	Responses		Total Percentage of Response
		Yes	No	
I.	Ethnic groups with small population figures	228(76.8%)	69 (23.2%)	297(100%)
II.	A group's feeling of social or political discrimination/marginalisation	222 (74.7%)	75 (25.3%)	297(100%)
III.	A group's feeling of discrimination based on race, skin colour, religion, etc.	186(62.6%)	111(37.4%)	297(100%)
IV.	A group sense discrimination on account of physical appearance/challenge	184(62%)	113(38%)	297(100%)
V.	A general feeling of unequal treatment by a group in comparison with other groups	213(71.7%)	84(28.3%)	297(100%)
VI.	Sense of insecurity due to history of group, race, religion, etc.	161 (54.2%)	136(45.8%)	297(100%)

Source: Field Data, 2023

The table above shows that 228(76.8%) respondents view minority groups as ethnic groups with small population figures, while 69 (23.2%) do not view minority groups as ethnic groups with small population figures. Some other respondents, 222 (74.7%), consider a minority group as a group's feeling of social or political discrimination/marginalisation. A

comparatively negligible number of respondents (25.3%) do not view a minority group as a group's feeling of social or political discrimination/marginalisation. Consideration of group feeling among minority groups tallies with earlier definitions adopted by this study.

Table 3: Existence of Minority Groups in Nigeria

Response	Frequency of response	Percentage of response
Yes	279	93.9%
No	7	2.4%
No response	11	3.7%
Total	297	100%

Source: Field Data, 2023

Table 3 shows that the majority of the respondents, 279 (93.9%), agreed that there are many minority groups in Nigeria. This response implies that most respondents considered themselves as belonging to one form of a minority group or the other. Besides, there is a general feeling or sense of marginalisation among respondents going by the definition of minority as considered in the previous question.

Table 4: Specific Minority Groups in Nigeria

S/N	Items/Activities	Responses Yes	No	Total Percentage of Response
1	Women	155 (52.2%)	142 (47.8%)	297(100%)
2	Traditional worshippers	234 (78.8%)	63 (21.2%)	297(100%)
3	Lesbians, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgenders	227 (76.4%)	70 (23.6%)	297(100%)
4	Atheists	236 (79.5%)	61(20.5%)	297(100%)
5	Expatriate communities	217 (73.1%)	80 (26.9%)	297(100%)
6	People living with disabilities	289 (97.3%)	8 (2.7%)	297(100%)

Source: Field Data, 2023

Most respondents, 289(97.3%), as shown in Table 3 above, indicate that people with disabilities are in the minority group. This could imply that many Nigerians feel a greater need for the inclusiveness of this group in the scheme of things. Other groups with sizeable numbers considering them as minority groups include traditional worshipers, 234(78.8) respondents, and some 236(79.5%) equally believe that atheists are a minority group. Similarly, the expatriate communities, people with unconventional sexual orientation – LGBTQ as indicated above, were considered as minorities. Nonetheless, slightly above half of the respondents, 155(52.2%) considered women among minority groups.

Meanwhile, respondents were allowed to mention any other groups not listed. Still, they considered them as minorities, and some names mentioned include people with albinism, children, men, poor people, ethnic minorities, homemakers, and socio-cultural groups were indicated as minority groups. Equally, some geopolitical zones like the North-central and Eastern Nigeria were mentioned. Some respondents also note that herdsmen, the unemployed, orphans, internally displaced persons, minority political parties, and people living in rural areas are minority groups. It is interesting to note that some respondents listed men as a minority group. It then poses a question of whether men are in some way considered a minority group as well.

Table 5: Major Concerns of Minority Groups

	Items	Strongly Agree	Agree	Rarely Agree	Disagree	Total Percentage of Response
1.	Access to media	61 (20.5%)	85 (28.7%)	79 (26.6%)	72 (24.2%)	297(100%)
2.	Political office appointments	171 (57.6%)	85 (28.6%)	24 (8.1%)	17 (5.7%)	297(100%)
3.	Economic power	152(51.2%)	104(35%)	19(6.4%)	22(7.4%)	297(100%)
4.	Access to land/property	74(24.9%)	105(35.4%)	82(27.6%)	36(12.1%)	297(100%)
5.	Inability to exercise liberty/rights	130(43.8%)	104(35%)	43(14.5%)	20(6.7%)	297(100%)

| 6. | Marginalisation | 177(59.6%) | 101(34%) | 14(4.7%) | 5(1. 7%) | 297(100%) |
| 7. | More states creation | 53(17.8%) | 70(23.6%) | 94(31.6%) | 80(26.9%) | 297(100%) |

Source: Field Data, 2023

Table 4 above indicates that access to economic power, political office appointments, and general feelings of marginalisation were the three most important considerations of the minority groups. Each of these rated well above 50%. However, 49.2 % of the respondents, as indicated in Table 4 above, agreed that access to media is another significant concern of a minority group. Request for the creation of more states, as shown in Table 4, were among the considerations of the minority groups.

Table 6: Digital Space Amplification of Minority Groups Voice.

Response	Frequency of response	Percentage of response
Strongly agree	116	39.1%
Agree	152	51.2%
Rarely agree	22	7.4%
Disagree	2	0.6%
No response	5	1.7%
Total	297	100%

Source: Field Data, 2023

Table 6 shows that an overwhelming majority of the respondents, 268(90.3%), believe that the digital space has amplified minority voices. However, a paltry 5(1.7%) of the respondents could decide if the digital space has amplified the minority voices. A significant implication of this figure is that digital space has amplified the voices of minority groups in Nigeria.

Table 7: Minority Voice Amplification: The Option Between Traditional and Digital Spaces

Response	Frequency of response	Percentage of response
Traditional media space	53	17.8%
Digital media space	237	79.8%
No response	7	2.4%
Total	297	100%

Source: Field Data, 2023

The majority of the study respondents, or 237(79.8%), considered the digital media space a better amplifier of the minority voices. In comparison, 53(17.8%) believed traditional media is a better amplifier of minority voices, as indicated in Table 6 above. Notwithstanding a few respondents, 7 or 2.4% could not decide which is a better amplifier of the minority voices between the two. This shows that digital media space is considered the most efficient to amplify minority voices, going by the significant number of responses.

Table 8: Media Access Rate by Minority Groups

Response	Frequency of response	Percentage of response
Very high	35	11.8%
High	138	46.4%
Low	46	15.5%
Very Low	78	26.3%
Total	297	100%

Source: Field Data, 2023

Table 7 above depicts that 178(58.2%) of the respondents consider minority groups to have easy access to the media. On the contrary, another reasonable number of respondents, 123(41.8%), believe the ease of media access among minority groups is somewhat encouraging, not too promising, or low.

Table 9: Minorities Use of the Digital Space

S/N	Items/Activities	Responses			Total Percentage of Response
		Yes	No	No Response	
1.	Hold meetings.	198(66.7%)	99(33.3%)		297(100%)
2.	Mobilise members.	247(83.2%)	39(13.1%)	11(3.7%)	297(100%)
3.	Seek public attention.	261(87.9%)	29(9.8%)	7(2.3%)	297(100%)
4.	Seek government attention.	271(91.2%)	22(7.4%)	4(1.4%)	297(100%)
5.	Tell their own stories.	293(98.7%)	4(1.3%)		297(100%)
6.	Education of members	278(93.6%)	19(6.4%)		297(100%)

Source: Field Data, 2023

An overwhelming majority of the respondents, 293(98.7%), believe that minorities use the digital space to tell their stories. Most respondents, 278(93.6%), believe minorities use the digital space to educate their members.

As shown above, 198(66.7%) said Yes that minority groups use digital media platforms to hold meetings, while a few of the respondents, 99(33.3%), said No. The significant Percentage of Yes responses gave credence to the fact that minority groups use digital media platforms to hold meetings.

Table 10: Digital Channels of Choice among Minority Groups in Nigeria

S/N	Media channels/Platforms	Yes	No	Total Percentage of Response
i.	X (Twitter)	218(73.4%)	79(26.6%)	297(100%)
ii.	WhatsApp	200(67.3%)	97(32.7%)	297(100%)
iii.	TikTok	157(52.9%)	140(47.1%)	297(100%)
iv.	LinkedIn	99(33.3%)	198(66.7%)	297(100%)
v.	WeChat	60(20.2%)	237(79.8%)	297(100%)
vi.	Instagram	227(76.4%)	70(23.6%)	297(100%)
vii.	Facebook	285(96%)	12(4%)	297(100%)
viii.	Others (Name)			

Source: Field Data, 2023

Analysis of the responses shows that 218(73.4%) of the respondents said yes to X (Twitter) as a valuable channel for projecting minorities' voices, but 79(26.6%) felt otherwise. This shows that X is efficient for projecting minority groups' voices. Another digital channel considered applicable to minorities is WhatsApp, which garnered 200(67.3%) Yes against 97(32.7%) that said No. WhatsApp is a close-ended platform; maybe sharing groups' views on different platforms could be a way to attain this.

Nonetheless, most respondents, 285(96%), said Yes to Facebook as efficient in projecting minority groups' voices. In comparison, 12(4%) said respondents equally mentioned other channels like YouTube, Blog, and Telegram, which could help amplify minority voices. At the same time, Facebook could be considered the most efficient because of its overwhelming endorsement

Table 11: The Extent of Digital Space Projection of Minority Voices in Nigeria

Response	Frequency of response	Percentage of response
Very high	109	36.7%
High	164	55.2%
Low	10	3.4%
Very Low	14	4.7%
Total	297	100%

Source: Field Data, 2023

As shown in Table 11, the finding indicates that 273 (91.9%) think digital space has projected voices. On the other hand, an insignificant number of people, 24(8.1%), feel otherwise. The endorsement of the digital space as a projector of minority voices is overwhelming.

Table 12: Skills for Digital Space among Minority Groups in Nigeria

Response	Frequency of response	Percentage of response
Very high	30	10.1%
Average	157	52.9%
Low	49	16.5%
Very Low	61	20.5%
Total	297	100%

Source: Field Data, 2023

While analysis of the responses to this question depicts an appreciable level of digital competence among minorities, there is a slight reduction in skill level among minorities. For instance, 187(63%) of the respondents consider that there are digital skills among minorities, whereas 110(37%) feel otherwise.

Discussion of Findings

The study findings validate theoretical frameworks and the results of the previous findings on the media choices among the minority groups, namely that the minority groups prefer the digital space. For instance, Spagnolo (2010) submits that the traditional media have been accused of empowering the elite or the majority positions against the minority. The example of the 'Mama na Boy' television advertisement by MTN was a specific instance of the traditional media taking sides with the majority. Notwithstanding the National Population Commission projection of women to men population ratio of 50.6 to 49.4 percent in favour of women, 85 percent of this study's respondents consider women among the

minority groups. Relatedly, the study findings on the preference for digital space among the minority groups further validate the co-cultural group theory that the minority groups use favourable media, such as the digital media space, to negotiate their ways with the dominant groups.

The above explanation of the study provided a corollary explanation of the ability of the digital space to amplify the voices of the minority, which Dargin, Fan, and Mostafavi (2021) in their study of vulnerable populations and social media consumption. Most respondents in this study agreed that digital media amplifies the voices of the minority. Study findings confirmed the earlier assertion on the influence of race, ethnicity, parental educational background, and people's media preference and consumption. Specifically, Okocha and Dapoet (2022), in their narrative review of hashtag activism, explained how the digital media space could amplify the voices of minority groups.

It is significant enough to observe that one of the other findings of this study is that political and economic considerations are the considerable use of digital media by minority groups. These two considerations take precedence over other uses of the digital space among minority groups. These findings validate the submission of Scholars like Oritz et al. (2019), who submit that digital media technologies have given voice to the voiceless. Further explanation of this trend is the outcome of one of the previous studies by the Communications for the Association for Information Systems, with scholars from the US, United Kingdom, New Zealand, and Canada, who in a 2018 panel report, indicated the traditional media of perpetuating marginalisation of those who feel economically, socially, and politically excluded which explains the need of the minority groups.

This trend is also observable in the Nigerian political systems as individuals and parties in opposition appear to have the most sympathy or followership in the digital space. Specific reference could be made to the

2015 and 2023 general elections, where opposition parties took control of the debate on the digital media space. Members of the current ruling party were 2015 able to air their views freely on X and other channels and gain public sympathy as they eventually won the election. A similar trend was observable in the 2023 general elections, although the outcome differed. The study findings further revealed that digital media better projects minority voices.

One other unique finding of this study is the specific preference for digital media channels among minority groups in Nigeria. More than eighty percent of the respondents rated the Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), WhatsApp, and Instagram channels of choice in that order. Even though not listed among the options, some other channels were equally helpful for the minority groups. They include YouTube, Blog, and Telegram. Nonetheless, platforms like Linkedln, which is popular among the professional group, have 66.7% of the respondents disapprove of the course of the minority groups. A similar level of disapproval was found in the TikTok platform, which is considered inefficient in projecting minority groups' voices.

Regarding the study objective to discover digital skills among the minority, findings indicate high general skills among Nigerians, with about 87% of the respondents having such skills. Nonetheless, Charmaraman, Hernandez, and Hodes (2022) submitted a study finding that most studies on digital media skills had concentrated on most of the population. This study has, therefore, found a disparity in digital media competence among minority groups. For instance, 84(28.3%) assessed skills for digital space among Nigerians as very high, 164(55.2%) considered it as High, 20(6.7%) thought it as Low, and 29(9.8%) thought it as very low. The figure for the minority groups indicates that.

Going by the very high and high ratings, it is evident that Nigerians' digital space skills are high. This rating is slightly reduced for the minority

groups, as 10.1% rated the skill very highly, and 52.9% considered it high. There is, therefore, a need to close the competence gaps among the minority groups. This disparity in skill gaps may explain why some people consider themselves a minority.

Recommendations

Based on the conclusions the study recommends:

1. Advertisers should diligently choose channels for the minority audience.
2. There should be a deliberate government policy to improve competencies in using digital channels among minority populations.
3. Advertisers and managers of public communication should endeavour to be conversant with the right channel for communication that pertains to the minority.
4. Minority groups should make deliberate efforts to improve members' competencies in digital technologies.

Conclusion

Following the study findings, which confirm that most minorities in Nigeria use the digital media space to express themselves, the government should find it appropriate to use the same platform to close rank with this category of citizens. Also very profound is the skill gap between the minority and the majority. A deliberate effort of the government is required to achieve some level of equality in opportunities among Nigerians. This study's findings would further guide public communication to identify efficient channels for reaching out to the groups. For instance, LinkedIn as a professional platform might not effectively reach out to the minority groups in Nigeria, whereas Facebook and X enjoy massive followership.

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