# WHO DECIDES
# SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY?
## WORKGROUP REPORT

## DISCLAIMER

**This document was developed by the office of the Chief of Staff to the President in collaboration with the Institute of Software Practitioners of Nigeria (ISPON) based on the deliberations and meeting notes of the workgroup meeting on December 3rd and 4th 2020.**

# Acronyms and Abbreviations

| | |
|---|---|
| CAM | Companies and Allied Matters |
| CAMA | Companies and Allied Matters Act |
| CNII | Critical National Information Infrastructure |
| FDI | Foreign Direct Investment |
| FGN | Federal Government of Nigeria |
| FME | Federal Ministry of Education |
| FMF | Federal Ministry of Finance |
| FMI | Federal Ministry of Interior |
| GBB | Galaxy Backbone Limited |
| GDP | Gross Domestic Product |
| GDPR | General Data Protection Regulation |
| GSM | Global System for Mobile Communications |
| ICT | Information and Communication Technologies |
| ISPON | Institute of Software Practitioners of Nigeria |
| M&E | Monitoring and Evaluation |
| NBC | National Broadcasting Commission |
| NCC | Nigeria Communications Commission |
| ngCERT | National Computer Emergency Response Team |
| NIMC | National Identity Management Commission |
| NIN | National Identification Number |
| NISI | National Internet Safety Initiative |
| NITDA | National Information Technology Development Agency |
| ONSA | Office of the National Security Adviser |
| OCOSP | Office of the Chief of Staff to the President |
| PPP | Public-Private Partnership |
| R&D | Research & Development |
| SME | Small and Medium Enterprises |
| STEM | Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics |

# Preface: Social Media In Nigeria

The Workgroup was created to consider and recommend an approach to explore how to harness the benefits of Social Media in Nigeria while mitigating its potential misuse. The role played by Social Media in shaping our national socio-economic and political agenda has come to the fore and the desire to support the articulation of a constructive proposition that accommodates the expectations of stakeholders in the public and private sector has led to this forum. Social Media space has emerged to be a critical tool not only for disseminating information, but an opinion shaper across multiple levels in the 21$^{st}$ century digital public sphere. A platform tool that enables and organizes public conversation so people can easily find and communicate with each other whilst facilitating public interest and participation in art, politics, and culture. Ultimately curating public opinion, not only through individualized results and feeds, but also through enforcing community standards and terms of service.

## Workgroup Members

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| **National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA) Representatives** |
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# Contents

# Introduction

This report serves as documentation of progress made to date in Phase One of the multi-stage programme envisaged. A 2-day Workgroup forum was conducted to get a clear understanding of the issues of Social Media usage as well as to articulate a possible high-level roadmap for policy development. The sessions also covered a deconstruction of Social Media and its impact on the Nigerian society. The Workgroup was of the view that a mutual understanding of these issues would support the development of a strategy linking Social Media to nation-building and economic development.

## Digitization and The Changing Media Landscape

The emergence of Social Media platforms dates back to 15 years ago, yet the phenomenon has exploded in a constantly expanding universe of content and platforms that has completely changed the media landscape in terms of ecosystem roles, players, and relationships. From inception, the internet itself has held out a promise of connectivity, openness and inclusion which has led unerringly to the inevitable threats to privacy, security, and identity as opposite sides of the coin.

By making people feel a sense of belonging and secure in groups or communities of like-minded individuals, Social Media has also helped to fragment civil society into cliques, promoting insularity, echo chambers and a distancing that complicates the social relations in the offline world. Ultimately, this is an ideological battle over defining the social space the internet should be, and it is not over yet.

**FIGURE 1: EXPANDING UNIVERSE OF SOCIAL MEDIA**

As observed earlier, the landscape has also changed regarding roles within the ecosystem. Prior to the age of Social Media, there was a clear dichotomy between the producers and consumers of content, with the former exercising editorial functions over what was served to the latter, the consumers whose media habits were expressly passively through selecting and maintaining

subscriptions to channels that best matched their idiosyncrasies. With Social Media and self-publishing however, these lines are blurry as consumers are also producers creating a new superseding category -**Prosumers** who exercise editorial functions autonomously. This has had fundamental implications for society and its interplay with the media. While traditional 'broadcast' media continued to operate in a structured centralised, authoritative (editorialised) and largely time-delimited manner, the unmoderated, self-governing, autonomous collective of Social Media has become a dominant and disruptive socio-political force in all countries of the world. And nations are grappling with developing a framework for utilizing this powerful force of digitalisation to the needs of transformation in the 21st century.

## Engaging Platform Owners

The founders/owners of Social Media platforms could be said to have been initially motivated by recognising one or more of three major reasons for Social Media usage: a means of socialisation, a source of income and for communications. Their motivations and focus on the opportunities arising from meeting these expectations have in turn largely determined the form and vector of Social Media management in the specific circumstances of each country. In countries where the context has been shaped by freedom of speech for example, the character of Social Media platforms has emphasised the ability of the prosumers to exercise the right of expression. These considerations also account for the peculiarities of countries where the dominant expectation is for socialisation. In each country, the demography and data of Social Media users will reflect the articulation of Social Media platforms.

From the foregoing, the dimensions of Social Media that together form the common substrate for developing an approach to Social Media management are:

- Platforms (tools) vs Users
- Digitization Advantages vs Disadvantages
- Producers vs Consumers = "Prosumers"
- Content vs Dissemination
- Traditional media (broadcasting) vs New Media (narrowcasting)
- Editorial License and Fact-checking
- Generational preferences and other patterns in social media usage
- Culture and Social Dynamics

According to the Hootsuite report, 169.2 million Nigerians have mobile (phone) connections. This represents 83% of the total population of 203.6 million people. 50% of the population live in urban areas. 85.49 million Nigerians have internet access. This represents 42% of the total population. However, **only 27 million (13%) of them have Social Media accounts that they run actively.** Anecdotal evidence however suggests that this minority have an amplified impact on society because of the network effects inherent to all Internet technologies. Social Media has an asymmetry in its influence on society, beneficial or otherwise. and consequently, must be front and centre in all strategic considerations of a future Nigeria.

# Workgroup Objectives

The key objective of public, private, and user sector engagement is to establish a clear definition of Social Media, the users, and the usage with a view to formulating a position and ultimately develop an understanding of a progressive Social Media management approach that is agreeable to all key stakeholders.

Social Media represents more than new communication technology because of its reach and pervasiveness alone. According to Eric Schmidt and Jared Cohen in The New Digital Age, *"On the world stage, the most significant impact of the spread of communication technologies will be the way in which they help reallocate the concentration of power away from states and institutions and transfer it to individuals."*

This then suggests that a perception study is needed to understand the impact of New Media in Nigeria as the emerging future state of the media and formulate a model of its integration with traditional media and related implications for issues such as identity. Schmidt and Cohen observe that *"for citizens, coming online means coming into possession of multiple identities in the physical and virtual worlds…(because) what we post, email, text and share online shapes the virtual identities of others, new forms of collective responsibility will have to come into effect."* It was also agreed that the platforms have evolved from a peer-to-peer system to one that is influenced by location and interest based on algorithms.

In contrast to traditional media that broadcast via channels that aggregate large and broad social segments that share the editorial tendency they can relate with, Social Media by default narrowcasts in much granular fashion to individuals and allows for a higher degree of filter on the information shared and stronger internal cohesion amongst its subscribers.

In this context also, there is an urgent need to come to grips with the phenomenon of "fake news" and to curb its influence on individuals and national security.

# Dimensioning Social Media: What, Why, How, Where?

## What?

Generally defined as forms of electronic communication (such as websites for social networking and microblogging) through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, videos and other multimedia content https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/social%20media.



**FIGURE 2: SOCIAL MEDIA STATS IN NIGERIA NOV 2020**

Examples of the major platforms that have emerged are in Figure 2 above with the most pervasive being Facebook, WhatsApp, Pinterest, Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn.

## Why?

As previously observed, the world is becoming more social and Generation X are the world's first digitally native generation viz. born into the prevalence of internet technologies and dependent on it for their daily activity as they live, love, work, and play. For Africa, and Nigeria especially, with its

growing youth bulge means that the rate at which most of its population (urban initially but spreading to the rural areas as internet penetration increases and prices of devices and connectivity fall in keeping with Moore's Laws), will discover their voices in socio-economic and political dialogues will grow exponentially as will the influence of the social media on their preferences, attitudes, and behaviours with the inevitability of adoption and usage.

## How?

Do we plan for a future with Social Media as its dominant influence with the rise in technology adoption, penetration and innovation? Clearly, any strategic formulation must include the use and technology being embedded early in schools (as early as age 5 in urban areas) while ensuring that the curricula in primary, secondary, and higher institutions are modified to include technology and study the use of Social Media.

With increasing rural-urban migration, poverty and population growth is projected to reach 350m by the year 2030, Nigeria faces daunting challenges in its ability to provide education for all children and youths in the country. The challenge is compounded by the changing nature of Education itself in terms of the instruction curriculum, pedagogy, delivery channels and even purpose, as the 21st century drivers of technology, workforce diversity, globalisation and lifelong learning significantly impact the sector. Access to, and the provision of, quality education for all children and students must be a priority for the country if its aspirations are to be attained. If it must enable its youth with the fundamental skills required to be participants in the 21st Century Digital Economy, technology will be critical in offering national content for leveraging multiple learning modalities, so students can experience learning differentiated to their needs and learning styles. The pathway to achieving this goal that has long eluded Nigeria, may possibly have been revealed by the opening of the portal of the unprecedented rolling impact of the tragedy of the Covid-19 pandemic in the past eight months. **A global shift has been forced by the Covid-19 pandemic towards online education which Nigeria can only ignore at its peril and social media must be an integral part of a near to medium term strategy.**

## Where?

The conclusion was reached that communication, media and information flow happens in real time on Social Media. The speed at which information is transmitted on Social Media is one of the key attractions for the generation of young people who use the platforms and the tools.

It is expedient that the Government (Administration) understands that the youths are currently dominating the Social Media space. Having established this fact, the next step is to set up a framework to work collaboratively with the youths to develop a defined role that the Government and the youths can play to harness the role being played by the youths in nation building.

# Key Perspectives

## Who Is Classified as 'Youth'?

While there are definitions in policies such as the National Youth Development Policy, for the purposes of understanding Social Media (especially in the context of a digitally native generation as earlier mentioned), our definition must consider age demographics in different cadres as listed below:

- **Age 5-12:** Justification is premised on the need to include the younger generation considering the changing times and the role of technology and its adoption at a very early age.
- **Age 13 – 17:** Early teenage years, usually the formation years with the highest level of social media adoption.
- **Age 18 – 35:** This age as suggested are the young and vulnerable.

The right understanding of the platform owner's perspective, objective and initiative, and the purpose for developing the application should be put into consideration in identifying and classifying the dominant target group (youth). It is also noted that the average Nigerian loses approximately 10

years due to inefficiencies in the tertiary education institutions. This ultimately creates a cadre of extended adolescence of youths.

## Youth Predispositions, Social Media Bill & Government Information Management

There is a need to better understand the disposition of Nigeria's youth as a special demographic with respect to the Social Media space which forms the context for much of their economic and social existence. The Workgroup noted the following:

- Youth want an openness and access to engagement with the world and global platforms. Social Media presents this opportunity and opens the vista for them to engage. When opportunities are restricted or perceived to be restricted, there is usually a push back from the youth as observed regarding the various engagements of Social Media related Bills that have been put forward on the floor of National Assembly.

- The Government (administration) is seen as unnecessarily controlling and out of sync with the youth population of Nigeria. The youth perceive that the Government (administration) sees Social Media as a threat to the "government/system".

- The young people recognise the fragility of the Nigerian state but ascribe it to the mindset and actions of older generations. The evidence of a recent Twitter poll indicates that they generally support a policy that would distil Social Media platforms for the use of everyone and for the sake of national interest and unity.

- There is a perceived capacity deficit in the information management of the Government - focus is expected to be on providing information (proactive) rather than defending (reactive).

- The engagement style "level of maturity" of Government handles and handlers in the digital space is seen to be quite poor. Information management and modernising the way information is disseminated is key to the improvement of digital evolution of Nigeria. The representatives of Government in the Workgroup confirmed that there is an ongoing capacity training drive for MDAs aimed at repositioning how Government communicates its policies.

- The youth believe the Government should be pushing for digital access and literacy to empower young Nigerians to engage in productive means of livelihood using Social Media.

## Editorial and Content Management on Social Media

Workgroup participants formed a consensus in recognizing the need for an establishment of an independent (autonomous) proactive and progressive management as necessary to curb the spread of unverified information 'fake news'.

The Workgroup noted that Internet technologies are by nature, open networks designed to encourage the unfettered flow of information and services across the traditional borders and boundaries imposed by geography and other constraints (see section, *Digitisation And The Changing Media Landscape* above) and from a technical perspective have been designed to meet this objective therefore creating significant challenges to imposing conventional paradigms on the platforms.

Global trends have also shown that the Public sector needs to undergo a digital transformation to keep abreast of the rapid and inexorable changes coming largely through Private Sector innovation and product development in response to market and government demands by citizens. The Workgroup noted that in Nigeria, such a digital transformation would necessarily demand a faster and more agile adoption of Social Media use by the public sector more so against the backdrop of the overwhelming recognition by its youth of the Digital Economy as the ladder to economic success and self-actualisation.

## Free Speech as early foundation of Internet and Social Media Platforms

The issue of free speech is at the foundation of the establishment of the Internet and the Social Media companies/platforms that were spawned from the commercial opportunities that the Internet provided. The Workgroup noted specifically Section 230 of the CDA 1996 - (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Section_230) in the Constitution of the United States of America in relation to this and observed that globalisation has played and continues to play a key role in the evolution of the laws of nations across the world. The on-going trade negotiations at the World Trade Organisation on e-Commerce are a poignant indicator in this regard as is the on-going politics over Internet Address Spaces also known as Internet Protocol (IP) addresses.

The latter will determine the availability and communications capabilities such as 5G, and the deployment of the Internet of Things which will exponentially increase the connected device space to 30 billion or more, a development that will hugely impact Nigeria's relevance in the 21st Century.

Social media is the first domain of the internet that will be impacted by this especially from the perspective of security. Quoting extensively from IPv6: Politics of the Next Generation Internet by Laura Ellen DeNardis,

> *"IPv6, a new Internet protocol designed to exponentially increase the global availability of Internet addresses, has served as a locus for incendiary international tensions over control of the Internet. Esoteric technical standards such as IPv6, on the surface, appear not socially significant. The technical community selecting IPv6 claimed to have excised sociological considerations from what they considered an objective technical design decision.* **Far from neutrality, however, the development and adoption of IPv6 intersects with contentious international issues ranging from tensions between the United Nations and the United States, power struggles between international standards authorities, U.S. military objectives, international economic competition, third world development objectives, and the promise of global democratic freedoms***. …How did IPv6 become the answer to presumed address scarcity? What were the alternatives? Once developed, stakeholders expressed diverse and sometimes contradictory expectations for IPv6.* **Japan, the European Union, China, India, and Korea declared IPv6 adoption a national priority and an opportunity to become more competitive in an American-dominated Internet economy.** *IPv6 activists espoused an ideological belief in IPv6, linking the standard with democratization, the eradication of poverty, and other social objectives."*
> *- IPv6: Politics of the Next Generation Internet (vt.edu)*

These and other battles are a continuing feature of the 21ˢᵗ century as nations and societies strive to cope with the double-sided coin of the Internet.

## Differentiating Between The "Government" And The "Administration"?

There is a need to clarify the understanding of what constitutes the Government and what constitutes the Administration in common parlance. The lack of a differentiation and a perception of 'Government' as monolithic creates an outsized expectation of the Executive arm in addressing issues of concern to the public, including with respect to its responsiveness to the public's engagement with Social Media.

While the Administration consists of the elected and appointed officials or the Executive, the Government is equally made up of the other arms i.e. the Legislative (National Assembly) and the Judiciary. An often ignored yet pivotal component of Government is the Civil Service, or the bureaucracy entrusted with the mandate to execute on the plans of Government. The Civil Service has tenure unlike the Administration or Executive Branch, and it is structured intentionally in a manner that is not subject to the frequent changes in the political administration. The consequence therefore is that the capacity of the Executive to respond to the pace and scale of Internet technologies such as social media is severely constrained. This is explored further below.

## National Security and The Fragile State in the Internet Age

Government's definition of National Security, and its approach to managing the trust deficit with the public that has developed over the decades is seen as fundamental to the Social Media management issue. From the public perspective, there is established precedent for the overwhelming distrust which is exacerbated by what appears to be an unwillingness of the Government to take the public into confidence in disseminating vital information without infringing on the secrecy of the Federal Government. In the context of Social Media where information flows in abundance and largely unregulated, Government is easily cast in poor light for example in:

- Appearing to withhold information.
- Responding after the 'facts' have been reported on Social Media.
- Conflicting and/or uninformed messaging from the various arms of Government.

It was established that to handle the trust deficit challenge especially as it relates to communications on Social Media, the Government needs to accelerate its learning and iteration of proven strategies from other countries who have seemingly perfected the art of communicating effectively.

## Existing Legal Framework of Nigeria

Some of the challenges militating against adoption include the lack of standardization of Social Media management amongst Government appointees, agencies, and institutions as well as the lack of a strong coherence in policies and legal provisions across the same. Evidence of this for example, can be found in the Customs & Excise Management of CAP. 84 Laws of The Federation of Nigeria, 1990 (CEMA), is the principal law guiding the Administration of Customs and Excise in Nigeria

and it does not specifically provide for the Cloud as a 'border' over which it exercises jurisdiction, neither does the National Broadcasting Commission Act, Cap. NII, laws of the Federation, 2004 which vested with the responsibilities of, amongst other things, regulating and controlling the broadcasting Industry in Nigeria apply seamlessly to Social Media.

A National Digital Transformation strategy would determine how the Government runs its communications working in line with the extant laws of the land, while leveraging on the need to update some of these laws in line with current realities and international best practices that relate to communications.

Key pending legislation requiring urgent consideration are:

1.  "Protection from Internet Falsehood and Manipulation and for other related matters bill 2019" (Social Media Bill) is pending the publication of the report of a public hearing concluded in March 2020.
2.  Bill to establish a Commission on Hate Speech is listed as having passed First Reading and is yet to be withdrawn completely.

Other policies and laws that will need to undergo significant review include amongst others:

1.  Cybercrime Prohibition and Prevention Act etc. (2015) Clause 21, Section 41, in particular
2.  National Broadcasting Commission Act, Cap. NII, Laws of the Federation, 2004
3.  National Digital Economy Policy and Strategy
4.  Nigeria Data Protection Regulation (NDPR) was issued in January 2019 pursuant to Section 6 (a,c) of the NITDA Act 2007.

The legal and policy framework that will guide the Government's Digital Evolution journey should support a process that is iterative and flexible, not stagnant. It should also support active stakeholder engagement that leverages their expert understanding of the terrain. Key to this is understanding that the younger generations will go along with the trends and there is a need to be agile in interfacing with them while addressing the challenge between Social Media management and regulation.

## Is Regulation a Viable Option?

As alluded to earlier, the philosophical underpinning of Social Media is anchored on free speech and open access to the information in a network. However, the three established capabilities the government should be saddled with in considering the issue of regulation are:

1. Punitive measures - government
2. Technical ability to regulate, while considering the cost factor
3. Ability to collaborate with the platforms and effective use of the tools

The table below presents the differing level of regulatory severity scale sampled from several countries:

| Country | Law | Key Requirement | Fine/Penalty | Regulation Scale |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Germany** | NetzDG law | To set up procedures to review complaints about content they were hosting, remove anything that was clearly illegal within 24 hours and publish updates every six months about how they were doing | Individuals up to €5m ($5.6m; £4.4m) and companies up to €50m for failing to comply with the requirements | Low-Moderate |
| **Australia** | Sharing of Abhorrent Violent Material Act | Set up an eSafety Commissioner's office with powers to issue companies with 48-hour "takedown notices" | Criminal penalties for social media companies, possible jail sentences for tech executives for up to three years and financial penalties worth up to 10% of a company's global turnover | High |
| **Russia** | Sovereign Internet law<br><br>Disrespect of Authorities<br><br>Spreading of Fake News | To switch off connections within Russia or completely to the worldwide web in an emergency.<br>Ban the "blatant disrespect" of the state, its officials and Russian society<br><br>Prohibits sharing "false information of public interest, shared under the guise of fake news | For showing "disrespect", first-time offenders face fines up to 100,000 roubles (£1,150; $1,500). Repeated violations could bring double or even triple the amount in fines, or a 15-day jail sentence.<br><br>Sanctions for publishing so-called fake news vary. Individuals, officials, and businesses face fines of 300,000, 600,000 or 1 million roubles respectively if the spread information affects "functioning of critical infrastructure" like transport or communications | Extremely high |
| **Singapore** | Protection from Online Falsehoods and Manipulation Act | Requires online platforms — including social networking, search engine and news aggregation services — to issue corrections or remove content that the government deems false | Media companies that fail to comply face a fine of up to 1 million Singapore dollars (about $722,000).<br>Individuals found guilty of violating the law, both inside and outside the tiny Southeast Asian country, could face fines of up to $60,000 or prison for up to 10 years. | Severe |
| **China** | Governance of the Online Information Content Ecosystem | Sites such as Twitter, Google and WhatsApp are blocked in China. China has hundreds of thousands of cyber-police, who monitor social media platforms and screen messages that are deemed to be politically sensitive | As the government pleases. | Severe |

**TABLE 1: REGULATORY SEVERITY SCALE**

Nigeria must be careful to ensure its signalling does not place it in the list of countries that have been deemed as anti-free speech with its attendant implications for global partnerships required to advance the Digital Economy.

# Key Framing Questions

In mapping options for progressive Social Media management, questions to consider are:

1. ***Do we need to regulate, why do we need to regulate Social Media and how do we put together a body to manage this space?*** The word "regulate" or "control" was a big issue as established by the Workgroup after a thorough discussion. Nigeria's imperative must pivot around the need to harness Social Media to achieve its national aspirations for a vibrant youth-led economy and society that ensures social justice and well-being for all in keeping with the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 provisions for Fundamental Objectives and Directive Principles of State Policy, under its Chapter Two.

   The Workgroup specifically recommended that the Government should recalibrate its approach and adopt communications and posture that introduces the concepts of "progressive management" and "safety", rather than double-down on the restrictive concepts implied by the use of words like "regulation" and "control". The recommendation is intended as a means of lowering the apprehension in the public linked to several legislative proposals pending, as well as critical to on-boarding the citizenry to the development of a beneficial framework for the intentional use of Social Media to advance society and economy.

2. **How do we manage the proliferation and propagation of fake news and institute legal action against proven offenders without inadvertently triggering suspicion, distrust, and the potential for pushback on Nigeria and global Social Media ecosystem arising from arbitrariness and lack of clarity in the application of the law?** There is a need to create and possibly update laws that criminalizes libel, spreading unverified and false information. In addition, there was the recognition that in the absence of an overarching legislation on Internet and Related Technologies Governance, several laws and policies that guide Government MDAs are contradictory, overlapping and possibly anachronistic or obsoleted by the developments in the technology space. The Workgroup advocated the development and strict implementation

of a new policy to ensure regularization of a Social Media policy that would work effectively for the Government, while fostering positive engagement between the Government and the citizenry.

The Workgroup agreed that we cannot ignore the laws of the land, but rather work collaboratively to provide solutions that would work to further enhance the productive aspect of social media for both Government and Nigerians. The Workgroup would develop inputs for a draft policy that accommodates and mediates these challenges and distils the recommendations into a framework that is accessible to everyone.

3. **How do we advise or make recommendations on Internet technologies and platforms that are supranational by nature, dynamic, agile, and significance impact on the socio-economic development of nations and their citizens?** The Workgroup recognises as earlier stated the supranational character of the technologies and platforms in the sense of having power or influence that transcends national boundaries or governments. This phenomenon requires a different framework and strategy from what has sufficed for traditional media. It also noted the reality of the Administration's drive and commitment towards the emergence of the Digital Economy as a source of jobs, wealth creation and an enabling environment for Nigeria's youth.

It is also important to consider globalisation and the role of our culture in adapting to new concepts to ensure that the private sector does not regulate the government. In engaging platform owners, there is a need to contextualise issues e.g., what is considered as harmful?

The Workgroup agreed that Nigeria's interest is better served by a progressive policy that creates an enabling environment for local entrepreneurship and the ecosystem on which it depends on to thrive. A key consideration of this would possibly be the accelerated development of Local Content in the form of alternative platforms and services that are better aligned to the national context rather than for instance, banning technology platforms and owners that may be not aligned to the nation's aspirations. There is a need to shift the focus of engagements from citizens to the companies (producers) and platforms (tools).

# Way Forward

## Digital Transformation of Government

As noted earlier, the challenges and opportunities of Internet and Social Media technologies are inextricably linked to the capacity of the Public Sector to adapt in the constant and rapid changes brought on by the technologies themselves. The data clearly shows that the wholesale adoption of communications, internet, and Social Media technologies (where available) by the citizenry as led by the Private Sector, placing Nigeria on the global map within a decade as one of the fastest growing in terms of mobile communications and internet adoption. This phenomenal growth and acceleration are yet to be matched by the Public Sector in breadth, depth, or scale, leaving policy, legislation, and management far behind in the expected role of supporting the economy and society in its participation in the 21st century global economy.

While the beginning of Nigeria's journey to digital transformation dates back almost two decades to January 2001 when three GSM spectrum licences were awarded thereby triggering the revolution that took communications capacity and internet connectivity from 450,000 telephone lines to over 120 million in a decade, it has been marked mostly by a lack of coherence and synchronized execution. The establishment of the National Information Technology Development Agency (Act 2007) signalled a recognition of the need for a strategic approach to managing Public Sector adoption as enablers and internal drivers, the formal adoption of the Digital Economy as a cabinet-level priority and recent redesignation of the Federal Ministry of Communications as the Federal Ministry of Communications and Digital Economy (FMoCDE) on the 17th of October, 2019. Further evidenced that Government appeared to have developed an improved understanding of the landscape.

The Workgroup noted therefore that a prerequisite and driving force for a progressive approach to Internet and Social Media technologies was professional use by Government itself through a "whole of Government" paradigm specifically addressing the following aspects of the communications in Government:

(i)     Internal Communications structures and processes

(ii)     External Communications structures and processes

The Workgroup highlighted the urgent need to ramp up the deployment and management of technology in Government communications and institutions with emphasis on the rate of adoption, and the coordinated implementation of digital transformation.

## Bridging Government and Youth in Social Media Management

The policy on Social Media Management should be holistic and agile in its capacity to adapt proactively in the long-term as both technology and its environmental context evolve. It is therefore important to engage the stakeholders in developing the framework.

Drawing on the experience of other countries that are working through similar challenges, the process and pace of developing a policy roadmap that would align internet and Social Media technologies to Nigeria's aspirations for a strong, resilient, and progressive economy and society will be enhanced by creating a safe space for the youths to thrive on Social Media while being active participants in promoting Nigeria as a nation. There are 2 new models that were suggested for possible exploratory and subsequent adoption by Nigeria if deemed fit.

The Workgroup was of the view that there is an immediate and urgent opportunity for a refresh in the present strategy of Government for engaging the Nigeria Social Media community in the shared work of nation-building. It noted that Nigeria's youth are already demonstrating to the world their capacity to leverage Internet and Social Media technologies and platforms for jobs, wealth creation and social good under the Digital Economy agenda that the Administration is actively driving. A transparent and mutually accountable strategy that better integrates and on-boards the stakeholder community in the shared goal for a prosperous, vibrant digital economy begins with clarity in communication between the Government and the youth, and an openness in taking a shared accountability for using the influence of social media technologies and platforms for the good of all. The focus of an engagement of this sort must also be adopted by the other arms and tiers of government.

The Workgroup identified the need to curb fake news as an urgent and critical responsibility of Government and the citizenry. Indeed, available data reinforces the fact that while the Government clearly recognises and is acting on that responsibility, there is an apparent absence on the part of the public of the deleterious effect of fake news on society itself. The citizens are greater victims of fake

news and cybercrime than the Government and there is a need for all stakeholders to intentionally promote fact-checking as an effective counter while also enhancing the capacity for accurate information and non-malicious content to reach the public through Social Media.

## Use of Social Media by Government Organizations

Nigeria's democracy is articulating and evolving through what may be described as a fragile state as its institutions, systems, processes, and culture mature through practice and adaptation.  Social Media has the unique capacity to greatly mobilise and amplify the tenets of social justice, good governance and civic responsibility however as previously noted, there is a need to refresh Government's conceptual approach and technical capacity in this regard. The framework for government should be to utilize the platforms for robust, open engagement which as previously noted, is often in conflict with its historical predisposition to the default of securing and shielding information that ought to be a matter of public record as is the case in the societies from where Internet and Social Media platforms originated. A transition to policy that provides a framework for the Government to be proactive in the digital space while not compromising on its responsibility as clearly elucidated in the Constitution.

The Workgroup identified the existing guidance in the National Digital Economy Policy and Strategy (2020-2030) for public institutions as well as the on-going initiatives by NITDA on a digital registry and the Cybercrime Prohibition and Prevention Act etc. (2015) Clause 21, Section 41, as offering a basis for required policy review and formulation. It noted that at present, issues of national security appear to overwhelmingly influence the considerations of Government regarding the Social Media space while the opportunity to build trust in government is under-emphasised and under-utilized consequently inadvertently widening the trust deficit.

The Workgroup identified the need for reorientation and sensitization on the digital journey that can be mobilized by the private sector and civil society in partnership with Government to build trust and maintain open channels for effective communication. It noted that the National Orientation Agency is now active and should play a critical role for government in disseminating information and monitoring public perception utilising its nationwide coverage while the public-facing activity of the security apparatus of Government is downplayed.

# Guiding Principles for the Policy Roadmap

The development of the Policy Roadmap is enabled by the adoption of fundamental guiding principles that serve as the framework and these include:

- A better society as defined by the Constitution should be the focus on Social Media management, reframing the challenge around proactively building strategies for leveraging social media for employment, entrepreneurship, and well-being of society

- All existing policies and legislation should be reviewed and harmonised to ensure consistency as a 'whole of Government'.

- Government should openly state its position on the restrictive nature of the Social Media bill presently on the legislative agenda and clarify its perspective on principle of regulation to create guidance within which it can safely and productively operate, not being synonymous with control of the Social Media space.

- Fighting fake news is urgent and starts with digital literacy and online safety awareness. Digital literacy as a means of empowering the citizenry to engage productively in the Social Media domain should be formally inculcated into relevant curriculum and training to combat cybercrime.

- A true partnership with stakeholders – Government, public, content prosumers and platform owners - is required to find a common ground and close the gap in terms of trust and shared goals.

- Intentionally supporting the emergence of local options for technologies and platforms that align with the context of the nation as the desired long-term means of addressing the peculiarities of Nigeria.

# Next Steps

## Private Sector

(1) Proposed poll on Social Media engagement with Government. This can be handled by the Advocacy Workgroups.

(2) Conduct a workshop on fact-checking to support the dissemination of authentic and verified news on Social Media platforms and reduce fake news to a bare minimum.

(3) Improvement on approach to enlightenment for citizens on consequences of cybercrime and publishing of fake news.

(4) Draft a statement to be agreed by the Workgroup on the engagements held so far. The statement would be shared with members of the Workgroup and comments contributed to reach a final agreement.

(5) Proposed plan to commission the mapping and development of data of Social Media usage across Nigeria.

(6) Enlightenment on digital literacy for vulnerable groups and on the consequences of cybercrime.

(7) Public poll to confirm the acceptability of the Social Media bill.

## Public Sector

(1) Review the MDAs with a related mandate to Social Media and digital transformation such as NITDA, Galaxy Backbone, NCC, etc with a view to gaining insights on how best to integrate new media and its purposes into the functions of the arms of government.

(2) Scope the requirement for capacity-building for MDAs to ensure there is an effective, coordinated online presence for all and a structure for managing Social Media

(3) With respect to the Digital Economy Policy, consider how best to coordinate with MDAs on policies that contribute to its framework, and ensure all tiers of government are synchronised in implementing the overarching strategy.

(4) Consider if the intended policy document will lead to legislation in the form of a bill.

# Conclusion

While inexhaustive, this Report represents a basis for a progressive approach to better understand the Internet and Social Media technologies in Nigeria. The recommendations from this initial meeting of the Advisory Workgroup meeting should inform the policy roadmap for a national strategy on leveraging Social Media for nation-building and socio-economic development.

The next meeting of the Advisory Group has been tentatively scheduled for the 3rd week of January 2021, at a date to be agreed.