



Use of Social Media Platforms for Public Enlightenment of NIN-SIM Card Registration in Nigeria

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Abstract

The primary aim of the study was to evaluate the impact of social media on public awareness of NIN–SIM card registration in Nigeria. For this case study, the Technology Acceptance Model was applied. The model seeks to explain how and why individuals adopt new technologies, particularly in relation to new information communication systems, and further clarifies the primary reasons for adoption, recognition, acceptance, and application of such technologies. The study employed a scoping review. The results of the investigation indicated that the majority of social media platforms were highly effective in facilitating the integration of various groups into broad government initiatives such as the SIM card–NIN registration policy. The findings revealed that, in relation to Nigeria’s SIM card–National Identification Number (NIN) registration initiative, social media platforms such as X, Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, YouTube, and others were utilised with great precision to raise policy awareness among the populace. The paper deduced that, in the Nigerian context, social media platforms like X, Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, YouTube, etc., are instrumental in broadcasting information about government policies. The paper recommends that the Government of Nigeria should initiate and implement a positive social media policy framework aimed at encouraging effective public participation in government policies and programmes. Furthermore, there is a need to monitor information on social media to ensure its quality, reliability, confidentiality, and privacy, especially in matters relating to national security. The credibility of sources should also be taken into account to ensure the authenticity of the information being shared.

Keywords: Social media, public, awareness, NIN-SIM card, platform.

Introduction

In Nigeria, available data indicates that internet usage in the country is above 50% (Reportal, 2024), and social media is one of the most widely used online communication platforms. The Nigerian government's success in achieving compliance with its SIM card–National Identification Number (NIN) registration policy is increasingly tied to the strategic use of social media platforms. These platforms, including Facebook, X, and Instagram, have taken centre stage in promoting public awareness, education, and compliance with national initiatives. The rise of digital connectivity in Nigeria reflects a broader trend of leveraging social media to enhance education, public awareness, and regulatory adherence. According to *Daily Post* (2022), as of

January 2021, Nigeria had approximately 33 million active social media users, representing over 40% of the population or nearly 90 million individuals. By 2022, internet penetration had risen to 36%, with mobile phone access exceeding 48% of the population (Premium Times, 2022). Data from *Digital Nigeria* (2023) highlights that around 31.6 million Nigerians (14.3%) of the population rely on online platforms to address issues pertinent to national development.

This pervasive use of social media has demonstrated a significant capacity to influence public perspectives on critical matters, including security and compliance. Records show that social media usage in Nigeria in the first three months of 2025 stood at 38.7 million (DataReportal, 2025). This implies that social media facilitates the sharing and dissemination of vital security information that enables people to make decisions aligned with national security objectives. Social media provides an accessible and interactive space for dialogue; it has become a critical tool for addressing misconceptions and building trust in government policies. The adaptability of social media platforms to various communication needs has made them invaluable in modern governance.

The Nigerian government has embraced the potential of social media communication platforms, using them to educate the masses on the SIM card–NIN registration policy. The government aims to implement the policy because the exercise would help improve the country's security infrastructure. The purpose of the SIM card–NIN registration policy is to develop an inclusive system of identity verification and accountability to ensure that mobile phone subscribers are traceable (Nanat, 2021). Such measures are further intended to enhance national security, improve identity verification, and reduce the occurrence of cyber-related crimes, terrorism, and identity theft (Nigerian Communications Commission [NCC], 2021). Thus, the concern of this study is to examine the use of social media platforms for public enlightenment on the NIN–SIM card registration in Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

The use of social media has been shown to promote deeper comprehension of government policies, programmes, and initiatives aimed at the public (Donovan & Martin, 2016; Akinmoladun & Olaleye, 2019; Elliott, Smith & Thomas, 2020; Jentzsch, 2018; Ogunleye, Akinmoladun & Oluwadare, 2022). A notable example is the work of Ogunleye et al. (2022), who analysed the role of social media in public awareness of SIM card–NIN registration in Nigeria in the context of national security. Jentzsch (2018) focused on cross-border registration and the compulsory documentation of mobile phone users across African countries. Elliott et al. (2020) concentrated on engagement with social media and its use in public discourse and civic activism.

The phenomenon of the SIM card registration boom in Africa was analysed by Donovan et al. (2016), who also examined shifts in the regulatory framework. Akinmoladun et al. (2019) investigated the role of social media in enhancing compliance with national policies in Nigeria. However, none of these studies concentrated specifically on the use of social media platforms to build public knowledge and ensure compliance with SIM and other national identification registrations as a means of enhancing national security. This is the gap in knowledge that the current paper addresses.

Theoretical Underpinning

This research is grounded in the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), developed by Fred Davis in 1986. TAM is one of the most widely recognised theoretical frameworks and seeks to explain how and why individuals adopt new technologies. The model, which relates to new information communication systems, has been refined by scholars over time. It posits that the primary reasons for the adoption, recognition, acceptance, and application of technology are the

perceived value and ease of use of the technology. A user's perception of the effort required to learn a new technology significantly influences their decision to adopt it for accomplishing tasks in an effective and efficient manner. It appears that both internal and external factors influence the degree to which technology is accepted and utilised. Internal factors may include the user's prior knowledge, experience, and attitude towards the technology. External factors include the perceived usefulness, quality, and effectiveness of training and support, system design, and the degree of compatibility between the technology and the user's preferences or requirements.

The developers of the model, along with various scholars, have conducted extensive research to validate its key claims and assess its relevance in different contexts (Omokanye et al., 2023; Oriogu, Subair & Oriogu-Ogbuiyi, 2017; Dahiru, 2019; Lucas, 2024; Atsbeha & Wodaje, 2024). These studies have demonstrated that perceptions of importance, effectiveness, and efficiency significantly influence the acceptance and use of technology. TAM has been successfully applied in research on e-banking, online teaching, e-voting, and e-health, among others. This includes studies on the use of social media and digital communication tools for raising public awareness on SIM/NIN registration, political campaigning, electronic payments, and online health record management. TAM is particularly relevant to this study, as it helps to analyse how social media handles such as Twitter shape public acceptance and compliance with policies like the SIM/NIN registration policy that this research focuses on.

Review of Concepts

Social Media

Mayfield (2008) cites Facebook, WhatsApp, TikTok, and X as examples of social media, which he classifies as new forms of online communication. Each of these new media has six potential strengths, including participation and engagement, as well as community and connectedness. Graham and Dutton (2014) assert that social media possesses "the affordance of user-generated content, the ability for individuals to directly engage with other individuals and content, and the ability to articulate network connections with other individuals." Seargeant and Tagg (2014) frame social media as centring on creation and participation, which enables widespread content development. They note: "The essence of social media... is to focus on the facilitation of participation and interaction such that content that is developing and shared over the internet is both a product of participation as well as traditional creative and publishing/broadcast processes." This implies that social media includes popular networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter, as well as bookmarking sites like Reddit. Blogging and forums are also included, along with any interactive presence that allows engaging conversations often sparked by a blog post, news article, or event.

Another approach perceives these digital communication channels as the utilisation of ICT, such as Facebook and Twitter, to facilitate better communication (Graham & Dutton, 2017). Rathore (2016) states that Web 2.0 "allows users to collectively classify and find dynamic information that flows two ways between the site owner and site user using evaluation, comments, and reviews. Site users can add content for others to see." According to an earlier definition, a group of new forms of online media has six potential strengths: participation and engagement, openness, conversation, community, and connectedness (Mayfield, 2008). Graham and Dutton (2014, p. 349) later define social media as having three distinguishing features: the opportunity to select and express a bond in network relationships with others; the affordance of user-generated content; and the possibility of interaction between individuals and content.

The use of ICT tools such as Facebook and Twitter to achieve better communication represents another contemporary definition of social media (Graham & Dutton, 2017). Social

media technology emerged following the introduction of Web 2.0 software, which is frequently referred to as social media itself. It is characterised by the use of user-generated content, the ability to engage with individual users and content, and the capability to select and express network connections. Social media encompasses a wide range of internet services, such as blogs, wikis, social bookmarking, social networking, content sharing in virtual worlds, and media sharing (O'Reilly, 2005). Rathore (2016) notes that Web 2.0 “allows users to participate through assessment, commentary, and rating systems, classifying and finding information which flows both ways between site owner and site user.” Users can contribute content for public viewing. All these features enable improved classification of information, richer user experiences, enhanced content participation, and greater trust (WebAppRater, 2010). Active user participation, interaction, and content creation and publishing are core attributes of Web 2.0 applications (Gorman & McLean, 2009). Web 2.0 is still described as “a business revolution in the computer industry,” despite being introduced in 2008 (Rathore, 2016). Seargeant and Tagg (2014, p. 4) declare that Web 2.0 represents a distinct shift in the development of the web. Their findings show that information can now be created, edited, and distributed by anyone using new media.

Traditional barriers to communication have been dismantled by these new forms of media. Social media platforms have already transformed and will continue to transform the interactions between message producers and their audiences. Technological advancements are revolutionising how data is created, distributed, and streamed. With capabilities such as image and video uploads, social media enables users to share experiences and remain connected with relatives and others.

Methodology

The methodology adopted in this study was a literature review approach. A literature selection and review method was developed to identify and assess a wide range of interdisciplinary sources, including peer-reviewed academic papers from PubMed, JSTOR, Google Scholar, institutional repositories, ResearchGate, and Academia, as well as books, policy documents, newspapers, magazine articles, and other critical materials. Furthermore, to analyse the data, the researchers employed a thematic analysis strategy to gain broader and deeper insights from the collected data. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), thematic analysis is a qualitative method that identifies, analyses, and reports on patterns or themes. They further explain that thematic analysis “minimally organises and describes the data in detail.” Braun and Clarke (2006) outline six steps that the researcher must follow when analysing data using this method, as illustrated in the table below:

The first step a researcher must take is to become familiar with the data. This enables the researcher to identify the source of the data and comprehend its context. Understanding the origin of the data helps to ensure its credibility. The second step requires the researcher to recognise and document all important and interesting ideas and themes that emerge from the data. In the third step, the researcher groups similar patterns together to form themes. During the fourth step, these preliminary themes are reviewed, modified, and further developed. The fifth step involves naming or defining the established themes. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), this stage identifies the “essence” of what each theme represents. The sixth and final step in thematic data analysis requires the researcher to produce a documented report, which may take the form of a journal article or dissertation. This report presents the researcher’s analysis and interpretation of the data. Subsequently, the researcher presented the findings in a narrative format.

Results and Discussion

The Use of Social Media for Knowledge Improvement

Social media is a component of internet-based communication that focuses on enhancing public knowledge and promoting compliance with various security policies. Folaranmi et al. (2022) describe social media as a revolutionary means of communication, information sharing, and public participation. Likewise, Ikpi, Undelikwo and Ubi (2022) highlight its emergence as a vibrant channel for disseminating sociological, economic and political information. In the realm of security, social media enables professionals to network, exchange ideas and engage the public in discussions about national security. Kim and Johnson (2011, as cited in Andoh-Quainoo & Annor-Antwi, 2015) note the continual rise in social-media use, underscoring its importance in contemporary communication, interaction and integration practices. Social media is no longer merely a tool of communication but has become part of everyday life. McCorkindale and DiStaso (2014) observe that social media remains a focal point for interaction and engagement, connecting users on an unprecedented scale. Dunbar et al. (2015) argue that the global increase in social-media use clearly demonstrates the usefulness of this technology in real-time communication.

Organisations have integrated social media into their systems, enabling them to respond promptly to public issues and share vital information (Coombs & Holladay, 2018; Carroll & Buchholtz, 2022). Over the past twenty years, the development of social-media communication has created a borderless platform for countries, institutions and individuals to interact (Carlos et al., 2022). This evolution has transformed security-related participation, allowing citizens to collaborate with government agencies in safeguarding community security. Laranjo et al. (2015) contend that social media permits messages to be sent worldwide via the internet. Abdulyakeen and Yusuf (2022) similarly argue that social media supports public knowledge building and awareness creation. Together, these trends demonstrate that social media not only informs people about events around them but also influences their behaviour, as seen in initiatives such as the SIM-Card–NIN registration policy in Nigeria.

In light of Nigeria's chronic instability, the government's use of social media to promote SIM-Card–NIN registration illustrates how technology can mobilise citizens for security measures. The primary rationale for linking SIM cards to National Identity Numbers is to centralise identification in order to prevent crime and enhance national security. Social media provides an immediate platform for explaining the benefits of registration, non-compliance issues and the complexities of adherence. Through social media, the government effectively reached youths and students who constitute the majority of its user base thereby promoting understanding of and compliance with security policies.

Furthermore, social media significantly amplifies the reach and efficacy of government projects and programmes. Its networking potential enables individuals to communicate, share opinions and discuss experiences; it fosters shared social identities that can galvanise passive observers into active participants in national initiatives (Ellison & Vitak, 2015; Gerbaudo & Treré, 2015). This dynamic alters traditional forms of public participation by empowering citizens to apply their creativity and resourcefulness in supporting state affairs (Gil de Zúñiga et al., 2017). These digital platforms can assist the Nigerian government in devising communication strategies that bolster citizen compliance with policies aimed at sustainable national development. Elevating social media to a key component of the country's infrastructure would enhance social interaction and understanding across education, governance and civic awareness (Basak, 2024). The widespread availability of ICT in Nigeria should further encourage active public initiatives to improve health, education and security (DeFulio et al., 2019). However, government

communication policy in Nigeria still demonstrates a weak grasp of responsive engagement, as evidenced by its use of social media to promote compliance with policies such as SIM-Card–NIN registration.

Jimada (2019) observes a transformation in government–public interaction since social media now enables government activities to be publicly shared alongside greater citizen involvement. Platforms such as YouTube, Facebook, Twitter and Instagram provide basic yet effective tools for conveying information and mobilising citizens. These platforms have proven beneficial in advertising, public relations and political communication, facilitating the advancement of policies on a broader scale.

In a rapidly growing, mobile-enabled Nigeria, social media is becoming increasingly relevant to political and economic discourse (Pew Research Centre, 2019). This phenomenon affords governments an opportunity to enhance national security and regulatory compliance through these channels. Other African countries—such as Kenya, South Africa and Botswana—have mandated SIM-card registration, thereby reducing mobile-related crime (Boateng et al., 2022). Nigeria, however, has grappled with fragmented systems and varying compliance levels since 2008 (Boateng et al., 2022). The new SIM-Card–NIN registration policy, enforced by the Nigerian Communications Commission, mandates that each SIM card be linked to a validated NIN to curb fraud, identity theft, terrorism and other forms of violence. Despite the potential effectiveness of these measures, limited public awareness and misinformation have hampered their success.

Given its interactivity and reach, social media is well suited to address these challenges (Akinmoladun & Olaleye, 2019). The Nigerian government could harness social media as a marketing tool to educate citizens, clarify policies and address public concerns engagingly via Facebook, WhatsApp and Twitter. Myrick (2015) highlights the behavioural and policy impacts of tailored communication on social media, emphasising the importance of bespoke messaging. Moreover, social media platforms are rapidly growing in popularity as instruments for public civic engagement with authorities. They provide rich, direct channels for real-time dialogue between the public and leaders. As Fuchs (2017) states, social media is a central tool for mobilising and disseminating diverse information. The presence of information across multiple digital channels increases the likelihood of citizen participation in civic activities and governmental processes (Elliott et al., 2020). Research suggests a positive correlation between social-media use and compliance with legislation in public health, education and security domains (Sterne, 2017). Regarding Nigeria's SIM-Card–NIN registration policy, social-media strategies have not only promoted the policy but also supported enrolment procedures and provided timely updates on changing requirements and deadlines. Unlike mass media, social media empowers government communicators to gather feedback from individuals who face physical barriers to registration sites. Its immediacy facilitates ongoing communication around compliance campaigns, making it an invaluable tool for modern governance.

How Social Media Can Be Used to Improve National Security: The Case of Nigeria

To enhance security within the country, the Nigerian government introduced the SIM Card–NIN registration policy. The mobile NIN registration system is designed to reduce fraud, improve identity verification processes, and mitigate the risks associated with identity fraud. It aids in crime monitoring and tracking, strengthens national databases, and supports security operations (Ifeanyi, 2020). Social media functions as a public engagement platform and plays a crucial role in ensuring policy compliance. It facilitates public understanding of the security-

related motivations and benefits associated with registration, thus contributing to the success of the programme.

In today's world, challenges to national security increasingly include cybersecurity, which is gradually being integrated into national security strategies. By linking personal identity details to mobile phone numbers, the government can monitor both offline and online activities. This degree of surveillance assists in tracking criminal activities, preventing terrorism, and improving emergency response (Okereke et al., 2022). Therefore, SIM Card–NIN registration in Nigeria is not merely an administrative exercise; it addresses core national security concerns. Without doubt, social media has transformed the landscape of communication and remains highly relevant in this context. The Nigerian government has leveraged platforms such as Twitter and Facebook to grant citizens access to critical information regarding the SIM Card–NIN registration process. Through posters, videos and infographics, citizens are informed about the necessity of registration from the perspective of both personal and national security. This approach is particularly effective in reaching rural communities that may lack access to traditional media. Thus, social media serves as a public relations tool, not only disseminating information but also providing a space for citizens to voice concerns and receive timely feedback.

The growing use of social media for security-related awareness aligns with global trends. For instance, during the #EndSARS protests, social media was instrumental in mobilising citizens in real time, demonstrating its power to influence public sentiment and drive social movements. Similarly, raising public awareness of the SIM Card–NIN registration through social media strongly supports the platform's role in promoting compliance, contributing directly to national defence (Ogunleye et al., 2022). Additionally, social media has become essential for combating misinformation one of the greatest threats to policy adherence. With respect to the registration initiative, the government has used social media to counteract false narratives surrounding the legality and privacy implications of the policy. For example, some Nigerians were hesitant to participate due to concerns about the misuse of personal data. Nevertheless, government engagement on social media helped dispel misinformation, address fears, and bolster public support.

The rising number of internet users and mobile phone owners in Nigeria reflects the country's technological progress. By 2023, over 84 million Nigerians were reported to have internet access (Statista, 2023). With a large segment of the population active on social media, the government enjoys efficient communication channels through which it can deliver timely and vital information. Platforms such as Instagram and Telegram now allow direct government engagement with citizens on national security issues. Social media enables the government to speak to millions in real time about their civic duties and the importance of national security. It also plays a crucial role in managing expectations and addressing service delivery challenges in various regions. Real-time feedback and continuous communication are instrumental in maintaining and restoring public trust in government processes. As long as information is transparently and consistently provided, citizens are more likely to renew their trust and engage with the system. These positive interactions support the development of government transparency and encourage citizens to actively participate in strengthening the national identity management system.

Further insight is provided by Udoyo et al. (2021), who examined the effectiveness of mass media campaigns in sustaining NIN registration in Onitsha, Anambra State. The study aimed to assess the impact of mass media campaigns on participation and awareness regarding NIN registration. Based on the knowledge gap theory and employing a survey approach, the research found that a significant portion of the population was aware of the campaign. Respondents

confirmed that mass media efforts educated them about SIM card registration, with radio emerging as a primary information source. The study concluded that mass media serves both educational and facilitative roles in promoting NIN registration and influencing public security consciousness. It also highlighted the influence of sustained campaigns on policymaking and civil security awareness.

In “The Rise of African SIM Registration: The Emerging Dynamics of Regulatory Change,” Donovan and Martin (2016) analyse the literature within what they describe as a fluid regulatory environment. They highlighted widespread resistance from stakeholders, challenges such as entry barriers, the financialisation of identity systems, and the growing concern around mobile surveillance. The authors recommended that governments intensify efforts to educate the public on the necessity of data collection for improved security. Building on this, Orunsola et al. (2022) conducted a study to assess the role of social media in public mobilisation for NIN registration in Nigeria. All respondents recognised the importance of registering for a NIN and agreed that it would improve national security. The study recommended that government agencies enhance their use of official social media accounts to improve public education regarding NIN registration procedures.

In another study, GSMA (2016) employed content analysis to investigate the challenges associated with SIM card registration. The findings confirmed that the Nigerian government was actively pursuing improved national security through SIM registration. It also noted that radio and television were dominant in driving awareness and implementation of the policy. However, the study called for more inclusive consultation with stakeholders throughout the planning and implementation phases, as well as a need for greater sensitivity to both national security and citizens’ rights.

Conclusion

The use of social media platforms for public enlightenment on NIN–SIM card registration in Nigeria has proven both strategic and impactful. Platforms such as Facebook, Twitter (X), Instagram, and WhatsApp have served as vital tools for mass communication, enabling relevant agencies to disseminate timely information, clarify public misconceptions, and encourage compliance across diverse demographics. However, to maximise effectiveness, a coordinated approach is essential one that involves government bodies, telecom operators, and influencers to ensure accurate, engaging, and inclusive messaging. When effectively harnessed, social media not only amplifies outreach efforts but also fosters transparency and trust in national policy implementation. As digital penetration deepens in Nigeria, social media will remain a crucial channel for civic education and public engagement, particularly in promoting national initiatives like the NIN–SIM linkage. By embracing a more dynamic, people-centred approach, social media can significantly enhance awareness, trust, and compliance in the NIN–SIM registration process.

Recommendations

To improve the effectiveness of social media platforms in public enlightenment regarding the NIN–SIM card registration in Nigeria, it is recommended that the National Identity Management Commission (NIMC), in collaboration with the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC) and other relevant agencies, adopt a strategic digital communication plan which should include, but not be limited to, the following:

1. Regularly updating content across platforms in multiple local languages to ensure inclusivity and wider reach.
2. Engaging influencers and community leaders who can amplify awareness messages, particularly among rural and underserved populations.

3. Running interactive campaigns using videos, infographics, and question-and-answer sessions to educate users and address concerns in real time.
4. Monitoring and countering misinformation through verified social media pages and timely official responses.
5. Partnering with credible and verified social media handlers to increase the visibility of public interest messages through sponsored posts or public service announcements.

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