Social Media and Security Challenges:
The Relationship between Security Messaging, Believability and Social Alarm

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Abstract
This paper is premised on the fourth McLuhanian law of the media-the theory of the over-heated medium-to examine the dialogic relationship between social media, social security and social alarm. While some scholars suggest that the social media's influence is negative, others perceive only the positive aspect but this paper posits that social media's impact on society is at once positive and negative. From such an inclusive judgment of the effect of social media on society, the paper proceeds to examine the dialogic relationship between social media, security and social alarm. From a purposive audience survey, the paper adduces that while social media has been used by many for security information and planning even to the creation of perpetual social alarm, the participative nature of social media makes it equally prone to absurd exaggeration even with issues serious as security. By the promotion of the true and untrue, the serious and unserious, the factual and the fictitious, social media promotes beliefs in its medium itself and siphons beliefs in its medium so that the message of social media demands high selective believability and the strong regulation with regard to the creation and consumption of social media security messaging.
Keywords: *.Social .Media Security .New Media .Participatory .Mediature .Alarm*

Introduction
Scholars of media have long realized that "advances in computing and information technology are changing the way people meet and communicate. People can meet, talk, and work together outside traditional meeting and office spaces" (DeLacey& Leonard, 2002; Radcliffe, 2002; Starr, 1997). As Habermas (1989, p.4) rightly deduced, the constellation and convergence of new media had necessitated the creation of a new public sphere with its attendant nuances (Habermas, 1989,p.4). It is in this light that Thompson's (1990, p.81) advocacy for a 'depth hermeneutical' of the social arena becomes appreciative.

The engagement of new media has facilitated the ability of people to schedule meetings, create new opportunities of learning processes and news dissemination that is in-debilitating the constrain of geographico-spatial demand and the dynamics of interpersonal communication. In the presence of new media, Agber simply stated, "Physical, geographical, socio-economic, political and cultural distances are fast disappearing" (Agber, 2012).

By granting new forms of interconnectivity and interactivity hitherto unknown, by altering the process of media text creation and consumption within the reach of the generality of peoples, the employment of the social media especially after web 2.0 has radically altered for all times, the dynamics of forms of interaction and relationships. It is equally true to assert that the engagement of the new media is altering the modus operandi of many different aspects of society.

The degree of penetration of the social media within the nooks and crannies of modern society and the speed of its diffusion is to say the least staggering to the mind. One needs no sociologist of media to decipher that the rate of adoption of the social media is far faster compared to the assimilation of other media that have preceded it.

One arena where the social media has continued to be employed right from its assumption within the matrix of media surveillance is in relation to security. The platform of social media has been exploited in developed countries to combat the menace of terrorism. In the 2007 wildfire that razed down more than one thousand five hundred houses in Southern California,

Sutton *et al.* (2008), posited that their research indicated that a majority of those who lived within the neighbourhood, got their information from the social network. In the unprecedented spate of political upheaval and power shift that has come to be dubbed the *Arab Spring* from Tunisia, through Egypt to Yemen, Nathana (2012) argued that the role of the social media in the security management was high. In Nigeria, a peculiar case of the employment of the social media in combating security risks and crises was showcased during the deception, molestation and murder of Cynthia Osokogu. The State Security Service agents who arraigned the perpetrators of the dastard act, succeeded via the Facebook address of the culprits. The social media has been employed to forewarn the populace on the imminence or presence of danger. The social media has equally been employed to disseminate information's regarding present or past dangers. This brings to the fore the fact often neglected of the effect of the media. The effect of the media is never an either positive or negative, the effect of the media is at once positive and negative.

The employment of social media in the realm of security is multifaceted first for security operatives, secondly for the generality of the people, and thirdly by the perpetrators of nefarious acts. The social media provides security operatives a vast data base to study and analyse tendencies, intentions, movements, lines and linkages of rapport. However, the use of the social media with regard to security also poses a lot of problems. The generality of the people have received and broadcast security related texts but even perpetrators of all sorts of deviant activities have also employed the social network to connect among themselves and to send warning texts to the populace thereby generating alarm.

According to the analysis by Forrester Research (2009), the ubiquity and ease of use of such items of the social media like blogs, wikis, and social networking portend an arena of easy escape of data from behind the industry to the public arena. Contents of confidential files can easily become stolen with the combine use of the social media. A data thief does not have to steal whole files anymore from any cabinet; a simple snap shot of the content of the file and subsequent forwarding, and the content of a file is in the hands of millions. By working from the ambience of social networking contents, transfer of data is now more flexible on the social networks. The use of the social media for individual and industrial purposes exposes individuals and groups to the invasion of malwares, phishing and other sorts of data viruses and the subsequent consequence of data robbery and loss. Cyber criminals can hoodwink their trusting prey by camouflaging through fake addresses and sites to compromise legitimate addresses. Blue Coat Security Labs reported that two-thirds of all malware attacks in 2009 were spread when users were offered a video clip which, when clicked, would report that the user needed to update their Flash player or install new software to view the video."In order to carry out the update, dialogue boxes requesting vital information served to spy on the users and endanger them.

Using a combination of content analysis and survey, Popoola *et al*, (2012) demonstrated the practical application of Facebook to combat human trafficking. Their research revealed that the content posted on Facebook by users had helped greatly in combating human trafficking in Nigeria.

One area where the social media has been used in Nigeria with regards to security is in the creation, dissemination and consumption of security information. Such security information may be to warn the recipient of the presence of danger. For instance

> *"armed robbers are robbing between Okene and Ajaokuta (received on whatsapp, (December, 2013)",*
> *"there is fighting between Akwanga and Lafia, pls spread the info and save someone"(received on bbm January, 2nd 2014),*
> *"Damaturu is on fire, pls pray for the Christians in Damaturu (received on whatsapp December 2013)" e.t.c.*

More often than not, when these information are sent, there is always an addendum employing the recipient to forward the message to as many as possible to save some one from dangers. Other times, the security messaging might be to indicate the location of missing property or person, e.g. "armed robbers have deserted a Toyota Camry with reg number BN 342 ATK at the entrance of Onitsha main market, pls spread the word". Similar instance of security messaging was carried out not once, not twice on Damaturu. "the town of Damaturu is

on fire, kindly pray for Christians there". There was a public refutation because as on the day the message was disseminated, Damaturu was in a state of peace. Recently, the town of Anyigba in Kogi State that has often been visited by armed robbers was set agog with a blackberry message that was broadcast and amplified on other social networks like Facebook and 2go that 'Boko Haram members were in town'. Banks were closed frustrating the normal tempo of business. Activities of the subsequent Sunday that was Palm Sunday was also affected by the mediated information that Boko Haram insurgents were in town. Whenever these messages are sent, they hardly fail to raise the alarm level of the society.

Statement of the Problem
Due to the heightened participatory nature of the social media where consumers are at once producers, and the lowered level of censorship on the social media, social media has often times been host to vital information exchange that has moved the social contract forward. But it is equally true too that the social network has been the harbinger of many untrue information disseminated in the garb of truth and thereby, raising the tempers for nothing. An exemplary case was the dastard information disseminated with regards to the Youth Corps members who assumed duties at Bauchi State. Shortly, after the corps members resumed, there was a broadcast message on blackberry messenger bemoaning the callous death of 50 corps members by a bomb blasted by Boko Haram at Bauchi. The weight of the information was such that even the State Governor was compelled to visit the camp, however, the Governor sent an immediate disclaimer expressing surprise at such callous act when the camp at Bauchi was in perfect peace. This paper therefore, interrogates the relationship between social media, social security and social alarm. By multiplying security messaging, the social networking increases a sense of alarm that could lead to beneficial or harmful end. The nature of the relationship is such that the factual is imploded, in other words, the believability of the factual on social media and the probability of greater believability of the social media factual information is impeded from the within the circuit of its false use. So that with regards to security, social media can promote security conscientiousness but at the same time dull and douse believability of security issues on the social network.

Objectives of Study
1. To ascertain the nexus of the social media use with regard to security,
2. To verify if the employment of social media for security can cause social alarm and
3. To ascertain the level of credibility of the security contents of social media.

Research Questions
1. Does social media security messaging enhance security or endanger security?
2. Is social media security messaging capable of causing social alarm?
3. What is the level of credibility of the security content of social media?

Review of Relevant Literature
It is proper to try in the first instance to give a clear clarification to the concept of the social media as employed here.

Social Media
The concept of the social media is not one that gives in to the ease of succinct definition. It is better comprehended under the notion of a collective noun albeit a very loose categorization. However foundational to the understanding of the notion of the social media is the notion of the new media.

Assuming for an analytical ground new changes in ICT, McQuail (2010, p.138) distinguishes digitalization especially with the dawn of Web 2.0 as hallmark of the new media while recognising the difficulty in articulating a discontinuous framework to the distinction between the old and new media. "The new electronic media can be viewed initially as an addition to the existing spectrum rather than a replacement". Agber (2012) emphasizes the fact that the new media permits a greater 'interactive feedback, creative participation and community formation around the media content".

However, apart from digitalization which has become a common distinguishing feature of old from new media, McQuail (2010, p.138) highlights the fact that the new media "transgresses the limits of the print and broadcasting models," to the allowance of 'many to many' interactive conversations. The new media equally too, permits a simultaneous reception, editing, and redistribution of symbolic forms. It allows for the 'dislocation of communicative actions' from territorialized spatial bases. It improved mobility, thereby promoting instantaneous global contact. "The new media hold out possibilities for on-demand access to content anytime and anywhere on digital devises like iphon, ipad, android, blackberry" (Agber, 2012).

The concept of the social media flowing from the aforesaid character, permits greater accessibility, heightened interactive relations, on-demand access to content and greater relations. The social media has increased the pace and speed of collection of information and subsequent dissemination of such information. The social media has equally made it possible to locate long lost relations and to build bridge of newer relationships. Safko & Breake, (2009, p6) hold that "Social media refers to activities, practices, and behaviours among communities of people who gather online to share information, knowledge and opinions using conversational media. Conversational media are web-based applications that make it possible to create and easily transmit content in the form of words, pictures, videos and audios."

The ubiquity of the social media and the level of penetration of the social media is one that attracts to it the critical eye of analysis. On the Nigerian scene, the rate of penetration has been high. By 2010, 4.6 million Nigerians were on Facebook. Inci (2013) argues that the social sites constitute the '4th most active online activity ahead of email and it accounts for 10% of all time spent on the internet.

Neuman (2012) has highlighted fivefold functions executed by the social media. In the prism of his analysis, geographical distances have been eclipsed, there is momentous increase in the volume of data communicated, it allows provision of increased speed, opportunity of interactivity and convergence of media. Social media have 'torn down the boundaries between authorship and readership' (Agber, 2012). Under the regime of the social media, the gap between information consumption and dissemination is collapsed. The mobile nature of the social media permits its ubiquity and 'scalable communication technique. Kist (2010) conceives of social networking sites as distinct from other forms of communication by the virtue of its online character and employment of web based platforms. The employment of the SNS is basically dual: to foster already existing lines of relationship or to create newer ones. It is informative to note that the social networking sites are highly interactive.

It is not wrong to conclude as does some authors, that "social media is all about conversations (Safko & Brake, 2009). However, it is worth adding that social media offers still more, except in the events that conversations be qualified with a nexus of undercurrents. There is, however, some truth in the apt description of social networking as conversations. The precise nature of the content of social networking conversations is a wide and wild gamut from contact with old acquaintances, fixing dates to explicit sexual talks, arranging rendezvous, sending images and files, to advertising all sorts of contents. Not only individuals employ the social media even companies, churches, schools and security outfits, the list is endless. Because all and sundry are present on the social media, it has been equally utilized by security outfits in the search for antisocial and deviant behaviours in society.

The social media has been employed to perpetuate anti-social behaviour. For instance the destruction and demise of Cynthia Osokogu has remained a fresh wound in the psyche of Nigerians. The father of Cynthia, the 24 year old lady killed by her Facebook friends in Lagos, said he believed his daughter did not die in vain because there are lessons other people need to learn from the unfortunate incidence especially with regards to the use of Facebook (Saturday Sun, Aug 25, 2012). Like a sad strained tragedy from far off places, the tragic murder of Cynthia Osokogwu aroused missed feelings in Nigeria. But it is worth highlighting the overt truth hardly ever mentioned that not only the death and demise of Cynthia was perpetuated on the social media, her assailants were also arraigned and arrested by the medium of the same social media. The social media therefore, like other media is plausible with the dual character of being a blessing at the same time a curse.

It is a researched truth that persons are greatly turning to the social media for all sorts of information. Sutton, Palen & Shklovski (2008) cited in Agber (2012) stated that persons in disaster zones often turn to the social media for basic and fast information. Useful as the social media is to the dissemination of information; it has also become a platform for the dissemination of false reports, as Ziya (2013) noted, sometimes, these false reports spread so quickly. The social media has been employed by security outfits too to spread false reports in the bid to dissuade actions.

The plethora of social media has been categorized into six different classes viz:
1. Collaborative projects exampled by the Wikipedia, blogs and weblogs.
2. Virtual social worlds (second life)
3. Content communities example YouTube
4. Social networking sites example Facebook
5. Virtual game world examples include worlf orwarcraft
6. Blogs and weblogs example twitter (Kaplain & Hasenlein 2010).

Social media have been used to foster and amplify the range of social capital and social connectivity. Croteu and Hoynes (2003, p.322) emphasize the impact of social media on distanciation, it has aided the "break in physical and social distances between places and people. Raacke *et al* (2008) argues that the social media like Facebook, Friendster and MySpace have created a new public sphere of interaction. But equally too, the greater interconnectivity courtesy of the social media portends a risk to security.

Agber (2012) contend that the spate of security crises in the nation of Nigeria has greatly impeded social, economic, political development in the country. This perturbing security crisis in the nation of Nigerian ranges from incessant kidnapping, callous and wanton destruction of lives and properties by Boko Haram, etc. In the optics of Agber (2012) "millions of people have been dislocated and disarticulated by the violence and insecurity created by this crisis." Gorier however, beyond the physical security crises is the psychological sense of alarm that siphons the sense of safety and fulfillment of Nigerians.

Theoretical Framework
Media Ecology
One theoretical frame that aids the comprehension and serves too, as an analytical base for studying the problem of the new media's social media is what has come to be termed the media ecology theory. Media scholars of the ecological bent adduce that the adoption of any media of technology within any prevailing 'mediature' is capable of altering the scale of relationship thereby occasioning a new power equilibrium among the varied aspects of the prevailing culture (Castells, 2002). The concept of media ecology was a coinage attributed to the media scholar Neil Postman. He used the concept in 1968 at an address given to the National Council of Teachers in America. However, Postman noted that he was by no means the founder of the idea even though he was the first to use the concept precisely. According to him, "the first thing to be said about media ecology is that I am not inventing it. I am only naming it" (1968, p.161). The theory employs a biological metaphor to delineate the impact of media on society. The concept of media ecology brings to mind the image of petri dish and medium as an environment in which culture grows. An exchange of the concept of environment with technology or media, a medium therefore becomes a technological environment of media that impinges upon culture. In simplified terms, it implies that the medium contributes to give 'matter and form to' culture. Ecology denotes the environmental arrangements of the items of an ecosystem. Media ecology, therefore, implies how the engagement and employment of a new media forms and fashions new forms of cultural life. According to Postman "We put the word "media" in the front of the word "ecology" to suggest that we were not simply interested in media, but in the ways in which the interaction between media and human beings gives a culture its character and, one might say, helps a culture to maintain symbolic balance, (Postman, 2000, p.10)". The focus of the theory of media ecology therefore strives to study media as environments. Studying media through the prism of media ecology implies studying the media and how it affects human perception, understanding, feeling and values (Postman

1970, p.161). Applied to this research therefore, the media ecology theory aids in the understanding and purview of how a new media applied to an old issue of security affects the patterns of order.

Network Theory
The concept of network theory emanated from a multidisciplinary background of computer science, graph theory and network science. The theory seeks to explain the symmetrical or asymmetrical relations between discrete objects and the graph of their interconnectivity. The theory seeks to proffer graphical examination of 'the structure of relationship between social entities'. Network theory therefore, concerns itself with how variables in relations affect one another. Network theory considers persons and groups as nodes webbed into interaction by varied forms of mutual dependency. Applied to this research, the network theory concerns patterns of flow of information and subsequent response of the information on the receiving agent through social alarm. The social networking system operates through the webbing of nodes of persons whose profiles are necessary for interaction between nodes.

Research Methodology
If the research was concerned with the content, nature and frequency of text related to security, content analysis would have been most apt for the research. But since the focus of this study is to ascertain the nexus of security messaging on the social media coupled with influence of such messaging upon social alarm and believability, the researcher deems survey the most apt method for gathering data.

The study is localized at the Kogi State University as primary population for this research. Such a choice is informed by the empirically proven fact that the youth are some of the greatest creators and consumers of the social media content (Crystal, 2008). As a literate community comprising mostly of youth with high social media penetration, the researcher adjudged the university community as most apt. However, within the Kogi State University ambience, the students of Mass Communication were adjudged most appropriate because of their formal and informal exposure to media in general and social media in particular. Since the Mass Communication Department is fairly large comprising of nine hundred and sixty-nine students; a sizeable sample size was drawn not just at the subjective preference of researcher but employing the Sloven formula by Taro Yamane.

n=N/1+N (e)2
Where n=sample size
    N=total population
    (e2)=level of significance (0.5)
Applying the above formula to our population

$$n = \frac{969}{1 + 969(0.5)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{17.560}{1 + 969(0.0025)}$$

$$n = \frac{969}{3.4225}$$

N = 283.12637 (rounded up to 283)

Questionnaire was adopted as a research instrument and the questionnaire was validated by a pre-test on sampled members. The questionnaires were distributed through purposive sampling of adept at chatting.

All the respondents used for this research come from the department of Mass communication. The questionnaire was shared purposively to Mass Communication students adjudged most appropriate for this research because of their lines of formal and informal exposure to social media.

Table one: Do you have any experience with text messaging?

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	283	100
No	0	**0**
Total	**283**	**100**

Table one is a confirmatory table seeking to confirm that the respondents were familiar with the area of research.

Table two: Do you chat?

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	283	100
No	0	**0**
Total	**283**	**100**

Table two indicated that the entire participants in the inquiry do chat. This is more so because the questionnaire was distributed purposively to only those who indicated that they do chat.

Table three: How often do you chat?

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Very often	108	38.2
Often	129	45.6
Rarely	46	16.3
Total	**283**	**100**

Sequel to table two, table three sought to find out the frequency of chatting. Options were provided qualitatively. In response to the question how often do you chat, 45.6% indicated that they chatted often while   38.2 % said they chatted very often and a 16.3% said that they chatted rarely. So, that it is right to conclude that majority of the respondents chatted often.

Table four: Have you received any message warning you of armed robbers?

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	194	68.6
No	89	31.4
Total	**283**	**100**

In a more operatioinalized terms, table four to table eight tried to find out if the respondent had consumed any of the common type of security texts often in circulation. Table four begins these series of questions questing to know if the respondents had received messages with regards to armed robbery. Responses show that 68.6% of the respondents answered positive indicating that they had received messages related to armed robbery activity. 31.4% indicated that they had not received such messages. This does imply that the majority of the respondents had received security messages relating to the activity of armed robbery.

Table six: Have you received any message informing you of fighting in any town?

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	201	71
No	82	29
Total	**283**	**100**

In the same line of inquiry, table nine tried to find out if the respondents had received security messages with regards to fighting and killing in any town. Such texts comprises of messages warning the recipient not to pass any road or town because of fighting and killing in that place. A practical example was the message disseminated prior to Easter 2014 that there was killing and maiming between Makurdi and Lafia. Responses indicated that 71% of the respondents

28

had received such messages while 29% had not. Once again, a simple majority shows that more of the respondents had received these messages.

Table six: Have you received any text informing you of missing person or car?

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	175	61.8
No	108	38.2
Total	**283**	**100**

Table six took the quest for security messaging to the camp of information disseminated with regards to missing persons or car. Other times, the information is with regards to lost and found cars or persons or even dead bodies. Responses indicated that 61.8% of the respondents had received such texts while 38.2% indicated that they had not received such texts.

Table seven: Have you received any text message informing you of accident?

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	207	73
No	76	27
Total	**283**	**100**

Table seven like table six seeks to measure the reception of messages related to accidents. Texts like 'the road between Ajaokuta and Lokoja is blocked because a trailer is burning across the road' are counted as security messaging because such accidents pose a risk to the road users. From the responses 73% indicated that they had received such text while 27% indicated negative. This does imply that the majority of the respondents received such messages.

Table eight: If yes to any of the above from 5 to 8, did you forward such a message?

Marital status	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	163	57.6
No	120	42.4
Total	**283**	**100**

It is not just enough to receive such security text but such text when received do they end with the receiver or do they multiply them? 57.6% that is 163 persons indicated that when they received such text, they equally broadcast them to other consumers. 42.4% that is 120 persons indicated that they do not forward the security messages. This shows that majority of the receivers do forward such messages. By forwarding them, they multiply such messages.

Table nine: Have you created any text warning others of security dangers?

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	27	10
No	256	90
Total	**283**	**100**

Still questing to know the dynamics of security messaging, table thirteen tried to find out if the respondents were also creators of security messages. Responses show that 90% of the respondents do not create security messages but 10% of the respondents answered positive to having created security text.

Table ten: If you received text warning you of security problems like armed robbery or killing of people, do you experience a sense of alarm?

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	201	71
No	82	29
Total	**283**	**100**

Questionnaire item ten tried to find out the relationship between security text messaging and sense of alarm. In other words, are these messages capable of raising individual tempers and

consequent of individual tempers are they capable of raising national tempers. Responses show that 71% of the respondents noted that the messages were capable of raising a sense of alarm while 29% answered in the negative. This does imply that the security text messaging is capable of raising a sense of alarm in the recipient.

Table eleven: Are the security messages true?

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Always true	36	12.7
Sometimes true	129	45.5
Rarely true	108	38.1
Not true at all	10	3.5
Total	**283**	**100**

Table eleven sought to find out the level of veracity of security text messaging. From the respondents, 45.5% of the respondents answered that such messages were sometimes true, 38.1% said that such messages were rarely true, 12.7% of the respondents said that such messages were always true and 3.5% said that such messages were not true at all. Those who said the messages were sometimes true and those who said that such messages were rarely true indicate a high level of doubt of the veracity of security text messaging.

Table twelve: How believable are the security messages sent on social media?

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Highly believable	16	5.7
Believable	106	37.5
Sometimes believable	139	49.1
Not believable	22	**7.8**
Total	**283**	**100**

Table twelve sought to find out the level of believability of the security text messages. Responses show that 49.1% of the respondents thought the messages sometimes believable, 37.5% said the messages were believable, 7.8% said the messages were not believable and 5.7% said the messages were highly believable. This implies a certain level of relativity with the believability of social media security messaging.

Discussion of Findings

This paper took off on the pedestal to inquire the nexus of relationship between social media and security messaging. Does social media security messaging enhance security or does it endanger security, could social media security messaging enjoy high level of believability and can it cause social alarm.

Without necessarily reiterating the findings one by one, suffice to note that some things are very clear from the data gathered from the field. Prime among the findings is the fact that there is a high rate of use of social media with issues regards to security. Data above indicated strongly the use of social media for security messaging. This high use of social media messaging for security reasons however, owing to a relatively high level of believability tends to produce social alarm. But because of relativity with regards to veracity of social media security messaging, believability is relative.

Conclusion

The use of social media for security messaging is one of the novel ways that the new media is employed in modern society. Whether one creates such text or not, there is high probability that most social media users will receive these messages. Despite some levels of doubt, when people receive the social media messages with regards to security there is the tendency to believe and believing, the use of social media for security messaging equally raises the alarm level of the society.

The ease of creation of social media messages even with regards to security issues, the relative level of veracity and believability with regards to social media security messages portends a high sense of alarm and risk for the society. This does correlates with Giddens () description of the information society as an equally high risk society.

Recommendations

Since social media security messaging is one of the rampant ways that the social media is engaged, there is the need for a strong form of stipulation and regulation with regards to the creation and dissemination of security messages, so that the temper of the society is not alarmed for nothing.

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