

Abstract

A content analysis was undertaken to research the paper. The methodology included a review of secondary sources in library holdings and interviews with organizations and individuals on the subject under investigation. These sources provided a foundation for content analysis and interpretation. Africa's population is largely dispersed because slavery forcibly moved millions and into new homelands where culture was alien and opportunities were non-existent. Eventually, many other Africans have since (willfully) migrated, despite predictable challenges. Notwithstanding, the African diaspora has endured strife, cruelty and humiliating injustice, and has harnessed social media to communicate with African on the continent. Consequently, platforms that include Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Skype, Instagram and Messenger are among the widely used social media to interact with African populations. To improve and sustain communication, along with information flow, the African diaspora has engaged in conducting workshops in select countries to maximize Internet utilization and social media software development. Other informational initiatives are online cash remittances for emergencies, national development, as well as participation in the democratic process.

Keywords: Africa, slave trade, homeland, social media, diaspora, culture

Introduction

The world's second largest continent, Africa abounds with large masses of land and oceans. On the West coast is the Atlantic Ocean, and on the East coast is the Indian Ocean. These gargantuan, massive wave-swinging deep blue waters converge on the southernmost tip of South Africa, thereby creating a fabulous flabbergasting dazzling wonder to the agape and adventurous daring human eye. In March 2014, the World Population Review put Africa's population at slightly over one billion., while demographics show an influx of Asian and European immigrants in the former British colonies of Kenya, Zimbabwe, Tanzania, Uganda, and South Africa. The population of Africa has grown rapidly over the past 40 years, especially in the populous countries of Nigeria (180 million); Ethiopia (95 million); Egypt (85 million); Democratic Republic of Congo (67 million); and South Africa (55 million).

In defining diaspora, Cohen (1997) says it is a Greek word that means the dispersal of a population through colonization. Today, the term implies a positive, ongoing relationship between migrants' homelands on the one hand, and their places of work and settlement on the other. Rheingold (1993) refers to these dispersed populations as virtual communities which vigorously explore the potentials of new information technologies to postulate their culture and to create a bond between them and their homelands. Similarly, Tölölyan (1996) defines diaspora as a people of African origin living outside the continent and are willing to contribute to the development of the mother continent.

Diaspora Community Centers (PCPs) in Canada attest that diaspora communities use information communication technology (ICT) to address causes in their homelands using

virtual networking. The centers are equipped with web-based communication; podcasting; voiceover Internet protocols; social networking tools (Facebook, Messenger, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube), plus Web 2.0. In particular, the social media apparatus gives diasporas an assured interactive platform during disaster or conflict or development. A unique example is the earthquake that struck Haiti in January 2010. Successful use of social media enabled communication between the Haitian diaspora and communities in their homeland. By using a certain text code, Haitians outside the Caribbean used their mobile phones to make automatic cash remittances.

Professor Karim of the School of Journalism and Communication at Carleton University (Ottawa, Canada) recounts the early use of media by diasporas in the mid-1990s. Then, scattered intercontinental communities maintained links through mail, telegraph, FAX, audio and video recordings, Direct Broadcast Satellites (DBS), including circulated film footage and television content. Added to these traditional media, Karim affirms, is the global spread of the Internet to maintain linkages between diasporas and their homeland. Kim goes on, 'since social media are relatively inexpensive, they provide for lateral, point-to-point contacts around the world, and enables [sic] instant interactive communication'.

Methodology

The paper attempts to ascertain initiatives undertaken by the African diaspora comprised of Africans living outside Africa as a result of willful migration or slavery in their fervent desire to communicate with kin and kindred on the continent. The present paper examines the cohesiveness among communities in the African diaspora to reflect heritage and culture on the one hand, and further socio-economic development and participation in the political processes on the other.

The paper's objective is to produce a document that reflects and serves Africa's dispersed populations, promote the indigenous culture and to record development initiatives on the mother continent. Above all, the paper seeks to chronicle actions by external Africa's citizens to retain intrinsic values and cultural customs of the continent. The paper reviewed journal articles under the subject and completed a content analysis and interpretation. Secondary sources were consulted, too, as well as books in library holdings, newspapers, magazines and Web sites.

As for primary sources, a total of 50 interviews were conducted between November 2015 and March 2018 with individuals in Cameroon, Ghana, South Africa, Niger, Central African Republic, Nigeria, and Ethiopia. Interviewees were citizens with knowledge and active use of social media and online activities within the African diaspora. Proficiency in French and English and Africa's lingua franca of Krio facilitated the interviews.

A total of seven topics were investigated. In topic one, the paper looked at the origin of the African diaspora. Topic two examined the emerging use of social media by the African diaspora. Topic three studied African diaspora's use of social media in order to advance development on the mother continent. In topic four, the paper reviewed the use of media to address instances of abuse suffered by Africa's dispersed peoples. Topic five considered the role of social media in communicating the voices of dispersed citizens to the homeland.

Topic six looked at African diaspora's two prominent highly accomplished sons. They are former United States (US) president Barak Obama, and celebrated football legend, Edson Arantes do Nascimento Pelé in the context of African culture and through the prism of the African diaspora. And topic seven examined training and workshops which are organized to maximize the use of social media in Africa and the diaspora.

The information flow communication theory provided the framework for the paper. The theory was appropriate, in view of the origination and dissemination of information from different parts of the globe with multiple players performing roles as sender/encoder or receiver/decoder.

Literature Review

Genesis of African Diaspora

Africans are dispersed, and irrespective of their geographical locations, they are all sons and daughters of Africa. However, the majority of Africans living outside the continent are descendants of those who did not freely make that decision. In fact, they were inhumanely, forcibly and brutally sold into slavery. Today, there are sizable African populations in Brazil, Columbia, Cuba, Dominican Republic, France, Haiti, Bahamas, Trinidad and Tobago, Italy, Jamaica, Norway, Portugal, Spain, United Kingdom, and US. Here is a breakdown of the African population in the following countries: Brazil, 50 percent; Haiti, 95 percent; Jamaica, 92 percent; United Kingdom, two percent; United States, twelve percent; Portugal, two percent.

Crush et al. (2011), in *Social Media, the Internet and the Diasporas for Development* recognize that, today's electronic media give the African diaspora unprecedented channels to communicate thanks to the Internet. This, according to the authors, has become valuable to transnational and diasporic communities to create public and private meeting places, some of which are interpersonal and communal. Consequently, diasporic communities have developed "global commons" in the form of imaginary community across borders. Bernal (2006) refers to Eritreans abroad. They use the Internet as a transitional public sphere to produce and debate narratives of history, culture, democracy and identity.

Meanwhile, Mano and Willems (2006) portray the growth of the Zimbabwean diaspora pointing out that, its growth has been accompanied by a corresponding rise in different types of media intended to connect with the homeland in multiple and imaginative ways. The two authors based their analysis on websites, chatrooms and discussion forums. Peel (2010) commends the use of social media by online communities within the Zimbabwean diaspora and their creativity in interrogating their own identities, citizenship and sense of belonging in transnational settings.

Today's African diaspora, says Palmer (1998), consists of the millions of peoples of African descent living in various societies, yet united by a past characterized by racial oppression, discrimination, prejudice and cultural deprivation. These descendants, observes Palmer, share an emotional bond with one another and with their ancestral continent. Furthermore, they face similar problems while attempting to reconstruct and

realize identify themselves. The author argues that, the peoples who left Africa brought with them their unblemished rich cultures and inherent diversity. In certain cases, they created nostalgic or imaginary cultures as circumstances allowed. Consequently, the African diaspora cannot be justifiably separated from the study of the home continent, Palmer emphasizes. Indeed, what is of the essence is not so much the geographical location of dispersed Africans. Rather, it is the recognition that, dispersed Africans have an insatiable yearning of belonging which can be put into two categories.

First, they want to share stories and experiences in their struggles and livelihood in their new homes. Second, they have a desire to communicate with beloved Africa and Africans propelled by a pursuit of intrinsic cultural affinity. Demba (2013), in ‘The African Diaspora: Impact and Trends’, writes about globalization and new information technology. Technology, Demba contends, empowers people, ideas, and products to become mobile and transient. As a result, people no longer have to live in their homeland; they can migrate and settle in a foreign country. This notion is parallel to the adage that, ‘birds of the same feathers flock together’. Is there any wonder why the African diaspora is committed to communicating with the mother continent?

Why Does African Diaspora Use Social Media?

There are several channels or forms of communication available to humans today. Users access media channels based on their needs or preferences. The question is: Why do people use social media? McGrath (2017) works as a senior trends manager at GlobalWebIndex. McGrath specializes in writing about online consumer behavior and digital trends. The author states that, at least 40 percent of Internet users use social media on a global scale and provides the following motivations:

- To stay with what my friends are doing;
- To stay up-to-date with news and current events;
- To fill up spare time;
- To join a lot of friends online;
- To network with other people;
- To find funny or entertaining content;
- To share photos and video with others;
- To share my opinion;
- To meet new people; and
- To research/find products to buy.

To complement McGrath’s viewpoint, *The Hindu Business Line* (undated), under the headline, “Social media crucial to connect with diaspora”, reports that, the Minister of State for External Affairs, M.J. Akbar, once addressed the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas session. The minister spoke of leveraging social media to enable the diaspora community to connect with India using available technology. It is, therefore, no surprise that the ministry has intensified using social media and to standardize its interface to accommodate the nation’s 183 missions abroad. Among the recommended sites are LinkedIn, WhatsApp, Twitter, Instagram and Facebook.

Crush et al. (2011) do not doubt that Facebook.com is now the world's most trafficked social network site (SNS) with over 400 million active users. Launched by Harvard student Mark Zuckerberg in February 2004, Facebook is a peer relationship-based SNS that allows users to create personal profiles and to establish 'friendships' with other users. In addition to demographic information, profiles generally include personal interest, political views, group affiliations and cultural taste.

Lewis et al. (2007) show how Facebook data can be used to define sub-groups by gender, race/ethnicity and socioeconomic status showing distinct network behaviors and cultural preferences. Additionally, Facebook users have the ability to form and to become members of formal 'groups' based on shared interests and activities; members can network with others to share information relevant to the group's description. Diaspora Facebook groups have grown rapidly since 2004. Many diaspora-related groups are nationally based, notably Zimbabweans in Canada and Nigerians in the UK.

Diaspora Builds Home away from Home

www.pcpcanada.com, writing in 'Diaspora Communications Centers for Development and Reconstruction: Using ICT and operational planning to harness the social and economic power of Diaspora during times of conflict, calamity and peace', implies that the web provides a platform for groups that use it. The platform allows divergent users to interface on the web, bypassing differences in language, culture, economic, social and ideological or even geographical locations. Actually, the web assures transparency which constitutes a departure from older industrial-based models of communication. Besides, social media engages the electronic features of the web by supporting prompt interaction, information flow and content analysis.

Information is vital in support of unity among members of the geographically scattered African diaspora. Unity, though, is not automatic. It is cultivated. This means taking steps to establish social media platforms, so information can be transmitted. Diamandaki (2003) is correct in asserting, 'The environment of cyberspace becomes a new arena . . . generating hybrid collective formations, such as digital nations, virtual diasporas and other online communities'.

The author articulates that, forms of social interaction emerge as the need to utilize cyberspace emerges, and as forms of social media are used to address reflections of home, belonging, community and identity. Diamandaki espouses the creation of mediated social networks which are populated by individuals belonging to different national origins and cultural backgrounds. It is fair to claim that, most successful forward-looking cyber space experiments tend to consider shared history, language and culture for the reproduction of a community in the virtual meta-space.

With reference to extensive online social media use by the diaspora, Diamandaki highlights various identities represented on the Internet. For example, part of email and web address is the country suffix, as in knd@hol.gr or www.childrensworld.uk. In the home pages of individuals, it is not uncommon to find symbols, pictures, text or images that portray the identity of the creator. Thus, it can be said that the author welcomes the Internet as a vehicle

for strengthening ‘diasporic’ togetherness and communication using electronic pages and discussion groups punctuated with tribal and national character(s) or colors.

On a global scale, diasporic communities can become engaged in using the Internet. The Kurds are a good example on www.akaKurdistan.org. Diamandaki reiterates: “The purpose of diasporic websites is to build a home from home. In the digital world, the memorable past is blended with the contrasting present that individuals confront.” Poster (1998) adds another dimension. The author indicates that, while pre-existing cultural forms characterize virtual ethnicity, they remain open to construction and to the imaginary. In other words, the Internet dictates a world forum whose intent is to ascertain the extent of cultural reflection or modification.

Social Media in Development

For Africans, being thousands of miles away from home builds life-long anxiety. It is also the case for those Africans who were forcibly uprooted from the continent. Understandably, there is a bond and interest in the welfare of the motherland and those who have been left behind. The diaspora’s affinity to Africa is dearly unshakable. Truly, the bombarding, intensive world media coverage of one African crisis to another does not go unnoticed by African diaspora communities. To this end, social media have sprung up in recent years to establish interactive communication.

It is in this connection that Rouge (2013) writes under the caption, ‘How the African Diaspora is using social media to influence development’, and published in The Guardian’s *Global Development Professionals Network*. There is, indeed, an online transformation whereby African voices have begun populating social media which can be credited to social media for generating a collective voice to bring about development in Africa.

Despite lamenting the impediments of single channel information, Rouge recommends the use of Twitter, Facebook, YouTube and other forms of social media in conceptualizing and disseminating the voices of the African diaspora. The author welcomes the advent of Twitter’s short messaging technology which has revolutionized political discourse and rewritten the rules governing dialogue in the annals of international development. can be mentioned. The first was a controversial development project referred to as the ‘million shirts campaign’. It was a campaign to dump one million shirts into the African market. Contrary to the planners’ intent, the campaign received mixed reviews and failed to attain the desired objectives. The negative feedback quickly led to its abandonment. The second case was a video campaign designed to capture notorious Ugandan rebel, Joseph Kony. But the video campaign was dismissed by prominent voices in the African diaspora because it was over simplified and misleading. Social media strategist at Connect4Climate, Ruge, espouses using such well known platforms as Facebook and Twitter for African Diaspora’s gatherings and discussions on development.

Actually, Ruge gave her first talk on the continent’s development at the Africa Gathering in London (UK) after learning about the initiative on Twitter. And since 2014, Africa Gathering has remained an online forum coordinating annual events in Africa, Europe, and North America. Africa Gathering can be described as a platform for members of the

African diaspora to discuss and share information on development projects in Africa. In 2010, Villages in Action was launched from a remote village in Uganda during activities of the 10th anniversary of that country's millennium development goals. Poor, yet resourceful women attending the conference prepared non-scientific statistics, charts, and figures. The conference was transmitted live on social media; it included participants in Washington (US) online facilities. A historic moment came when the Washington participants invited the Ugandan women to speak on the microphone. Ruge characterizes the event this way: 'Social media injected its voice into the discussion on global goals, and Villages in Action was the first diaspora-led development project through online engagement'.

In South America, Taurasi (2012) reports on Improving Access to Employment Program in El Salvador. In the piece, 'Social media for development: making the most of Facebook', Taurasi recollects that, the program was initially designed to engage young Salvadorans seeking employment. But the project staff made one realization: The messages that were transmitted using traditional media of radio-television and newspapers were not reaching the target audience. Seizing on the popularity of Facebook among people under the age of 26, the project management changed course in message conceptualization and delivery. The project created its own Facebook page and posted job vacancies, employer highlights and program-sponsored career courses.

Choosing social media proved phenomenally successful. In less than two years, the project grew from 800 to more than 65,000 fans. Of that number, 90 percent were in the eighteen-34 targeted age bracket. In view of extraordinary online success, companies began asking to post vacancies on the project's Facebook page. Subsequently, 40 private companies posted an average of fifteen jobs per week. Taurisa is aware that, creating a social media marketing strategy is not about numbers per se; it is about replacing traditional media. It is also about connecting with the target audience using social media.

As the Jamaican Diaspora celebrated the homeland's independence in 2011, Jamaicans were treated to a speech in Atlanta, Georgia (US), by prime minister Andrew Holness. The prime minister spoke of the imperative to establish social networks, adding, 'a virtual friend can become your actual friend'. Holness welcomed the Jamaican diaspora's desire to communicate with the homeland using social media. "Twitter offers real time conversations and a wealth of information from a sub-set of Jamaicans who are articulate, educated and intelligent", said the prime minister. The latter advised members of the Jamaican diaspora to use social media to become informed about investment opportunities in their homeland.

Holness asked three questions pertaining to social media: What are youth doing online? How are they using new technologies on the Internet and cell phones? What do they think when you can work or play using a mobile device? To these questions, the prime minister answered, 'Instead of living in an actual community . . . I live on Twitter and engage in participant observation'. Holness left the Jamaican diaspora with two pieces of advice, a) To keep abreast by responding to Facebook conversation, and b) To remember what one teenager told him, 'If you are not on Facebook, it's like you don't exist'.

To communicate with the homeland, St. Jean (2014), a community member of the Haitian diaspora, cries out in, 'My Lament for Haiti'. St. Jean worries about the misfortunes that plague her homeland said to be the poorest country in the western hemisphere. The writer confesses not to have been to Haiti, but speaks the language, eats the food, and is immersed in a culture from which she is separated by land and sea.

The social media enthusiast is understandably saddened by war, violence, and poverty in Haiti. To communicate with the motherland, and to create a home away from home, St. Jean uses the Internet, specifically www.twitter.com/MarthaStJean. Once during an online interaction, one follower asked, 'Does anyone know any groups that are accepting volunteers to actually go to Haiti and help? I'm available and could go for a month or more, as a volunteer'.

Social Media and Africa's Conflicts

It serves no purpose to belabor the point that Africa remains a poor and deprived continent. Nevertheless, Africa is marching forward thanks to its sons and daughters in the diaspora. The latter have introduced social media to communicate with African populations. CNN's Jason Miks posted a blog on 17 July 2012, entitled, "Four ways social media could transform conflict in Africa." First, social media can serve in early warning systems aimed at helping citizens stay connected to humanitarian organizations and in keeping citizens secure in the aftermath of crimes. For instance, in the turmoil following Kenya's 2008 post-election violence, a blogger's plea for timely information on political deaths resulted in the creation of one testimony in Swahili language. Second, social media can make African leaders become more sensitive and more accountable to their populations when it concerns accurate facts necessary for interaction between citizens and governments. 'Sudan Revolts' have used Twitter to call on the people and the international community to launch an Arab Spring-type movement to oust Omar al-Bashir from power. Third, social media can lead to greater clarity in reporting dimensions of conflicts. Dissenting Tweets in Uganda disputed assertions in the viral Kony2012 video. The African diaspora used social media to communicate the domestic politics of their home countries to the world. Fourth, social media can be peace-makers by facilitating communication between rival groups or warring factions. Groups such as Al Shabab (Somalia), Boko Haram (Nigeria), and Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (Mali, Mauritania, Niger) rely on Twitter and Facebook. Counter communication relaying patriotic, positive and non-violent themes can be channeled through social media.

Diaspora's Social Media and Tourism

East Africa is considered home of the safari where the Maasai Mara dominates in the sphere of tourism. Deemed Africa's loveliest tourist enclave, the Mara forms the northernmost limit of the greater Serengeti-Mara eco-system where an abundance of Africa's game roams over the seemingly endless grasslands. A year-round destination with temperate climate and seasons dictated by rainfall, the Mara never fails to deliver, making it a breathtaking setting for wildlife photographers, safari enthusiasts, first-timers and seasoned travelers alike. Well, is all that changing due to the diaspora's use of social media?

Khanya Mtshali writes in ‘African Intagrammers documenting rare, hidden hotspots on the continent are disrupting tourism’, and published in *Quartz Africa* on 19 August 2017. Mtshali says travelling through Africa was once considered unsafe, costly and devoid of variety. Previous tourist attractions included the safari in Kenya, pyramids in Egypt and river rafting in Zambia or Zimbabwe. The writer regrets that young African innovators, and diaspora entrepreneurs, are turning people’s desire to see “a different side of Africa into business.”

Through the use of social media, travel platforms like Tastemakers Africa, Everyday Africa, Hip Africa, Visiter L’Afrique and others, are giving African travel and tourism a fresh and youthful injection. Today, social media is used in reimagining the possibilities of African travel, not just seeing the “Big Five” on a game reserve truck in Morocco. The writer makes reference to Cheraé Robinson, chief executive of Tastemakers Africa. Robinson started the online platform after working in international development with visits to Nairobi, Freetown, Lagos and Johannesburg. The artist recollects, ‘When I visited those places, I felt their dynamic and creative cultures weren’t being covered’.

Hip Africa founder, Ruby Audi, had a similar inspiration as a journalist. Audi realized there is a platform offering practical advice on how to travel between African countries. “There wasn’t really a place to go where they could tell you how to book a hotel, get a visa, and how to travel around in different African countries.” Despite being in London (UK), Audi had knowledge of Africa beyond destinations such as Cape Town and Rabat. A recurring theme for these innovators is capturing a face in Africa not often seen in mainstream media. Instagram and other social media platforms are helping show sights of African cities and cultures. Others are following suite. Cameroonian founder of Visiter l’Afrique, Diane Audrey Ngako, started an Instagram page three years ago as a means to counter the West and American view of Africa as ridden with “famine and wars.” Really, what began as a social media hobby has blossomed into a viable business with marketing partnerships.

Findings

Social Media and Migrant Abuse

There is no need to restate the calamitous conditions that slavery and colonialism have caused Africa and African populations because doing so would be too depressing. These conditions have, however, continued to make Africans take high risks as they attempt to flee the continent in search of dreamed betterment yonder. They have sometimes taken to the high seas to migrate to countries where even domestic work is preferred to living under unsettling conditions in the homeland. Such is the fate of the African diaspora in the Middle East.

Genet (2013), writing for the Huffington Post under the headline, ‘Beyond Outrage: How the African Diaspora Can Support Migrant Worker Rights in the Middle East,’ reports on protests by Ethiopians at Saudi Embassies around the world. They were protesting in support of online videos documenting violence against migrant workers in the Kingdom of

Saudi Arabia. This occurred during a Saudi crackdown on unregistered foreign workers in that country.

In Riyadh, Ethiopian migrant workers attempted to protest. But they became the target of angry vigilante mobs that beat and killed at least three Ethiopian workers and injured many more. The violence is symptomatic of the lack of legal protection for migrant workers in the Middle East where abuse against Africans has been widely reported through social media. It is time to move beyond outrage and put in place strategies to end the abuse of domestic African migrant workers in the Middle East, Genet proposes. As a remedy, the journalist suggests ‘Middle East Domestic Help Abuse Reporting’, an online crowd-mapping site.

Economic and Political Initiatives

The African diaspora recognizes the power of social media. Somali journalists associated with the United Kingdom (UK) diaspora started paving the way for consultations on media reform with special emphasis on using Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. Consultations centered on the project, XOG-SUGAN: UK Diaspora Media Consultation, a five-week process that focused on highlighting the importance of social media. The initiative is grandfathered by Integrity Research and Consultancy (www.integrityresearch.com). It is an initiative exploring the use of social media in nation building, including conflict resolution and the guarantee of freedom of press. www.xog-sugandiasporaconsultation.co.uk is an online platform that develops ways of using social media to communicate with Somalia and Somalis.

King and Grullon (undated) maintain that diasporas are increasingly becoming influential actors in the delivery of aid to their home countries. The authors admit diasporas are using the Internet to make direct cash transfers and in compiling valuable information on crisis or disasters. King and Grullon go further. The authors point out that, social media has made possible the establishment of virtual channels of communication between the diasporas and the populations affected by disasters in their homelands. Whereas a non-government organization (NGO) may take weeks or months to dispatch large-scale humanitarian aid to affected areas, diasporas are able to transfer aid in timely manner through e-vouchers and cash transfers. These online remittances revitalize local markets, restore livelihoods, and disburse emergency funds consistent with local needs.

Hammond (2012) says about two billion dollars in online remittances were sent to Somalia that year, with about 200 million dollars directed toward humanitarian aid and other types of development. Hammond actually credits mobile phones, e-banking, and social media that have revolutionized the ability to support and maintain connections with communities of origin. The author discusses the increased availability and affordability of new social media technologies that have strengthened communication between the diasporas and their homelands.

Ushahidi (2013) makes available open-source software to track and report violent incidents following the disputed Kenyan presidential elections. In Nigeria, a Voice of America (VOA) report, ‘Nigerian Diaspora Seeks Credible Elections Using Social Media’, narrates

the diaspora's involvement in the democratic process within the homeland. A produced video was also uploaded to YouTube during the 2013 legislative election; and below the video was a phone number to the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). Citizens were encouragement to call the number to make comments or to register complaints.

Furthermore, there were hundreds of Facebook pages posted in support of free and fair elections. These were posted by the Nigerian Diaspora in the US. Twitter, too, provided a forum for interactive communication, preceded by hash tags such as 'Nigeria Decides'. Within Nigeria itself, candidates running for office posted important announcements on Facebook and Twitter urging the diaspora community to cast their ballots in absentia.

Across the continent in Kenya, hate speech was featured on social media. The Star (2013) newspaper printed the article, 'Kenya: Diaspora Should Stop Hate Speech'. Aware that the Kenyan Diaspora inundated social media with hate speech, the newspaper remarked that senders of hate speech seem least bothered by the havoc the speech may trigger back home. The paper accused the Kenyan diaspora of promoting hate speech. The violence that sprung after the 2007 general election, the paper comments, was largely caused by sentiments posted on Facebook and Twitter.

Prominent Sons and Culture

Yes, Africa might be the dark continent. Notwithstanding, Africa has a few glowing spots thanks to worldly accomplished sons in the African diaspora who have gained international repute in political ingenuity and sportsman's accomplishments. In addition, the continent's rich culture has withstood the test of time and subjugation. It is not surprising that remarkable worldwide achievements of two sons, along with the yearning to preserve culture, have continued to spur the African diaspora communities to keep aflame the chatter on social media.

Let us first turn to Barack Obama, former US president. Obama grew up in the US, but his father is Kenyan. Butty (2013) writes in, 'African-Caribbean Diaspora to Take Part in Obama Inauguration', commending the diaspora community on playing an important role in the Inaugural Ball to mark the president's second term in office. Butty recalls one organizer saying, 'We're cognizant that people of African and Caribbean Diaspora have been praying that president Obama is re-elected because he's one of us. He's a son of Africa'.

On a flashy, more flamboyant world of universal football, there is one, and only one Pelé. www.en.wikipedia.com chronicles Pelé's fortitude. In 1999, Pelé was voted World Player of the Century by the International Federation of Football History and Statistics. He was elected Athlete of the Century by the International Olympic Committee (IOC). In 2013, Pelé received the Federation of International Football Association (FIFA) 'Ballon d'Or Prix d'Honneur' for career achievements as a global football icon. Pelé is the son of Africa's great, great, and great grandparents. These Africans were forcibly uprooted from Africa and separated from their families by the Portuguese during the barbaric triple-century slave trade. As a note, slaves taken to Brazil were mostly from West and Central

Africa. Although they have spent hundreds of years in the diaspora, Africans in Brazil do not only make up 50 percent of the population in their new homeland, but also maintain the black pigment of their skin. Such is the case with indomitable Pelé. That Brazil was given the odds of winning the 2014 World Cup in Brazil is a tribute to Pelé, says Samuel (2014) in the article, ‘Die-hard fan Sid ready to Samba in Brazil’.

The writer admits there is only one Pelé: winner of three World Cups and Sportsman of the Century. Samuel describes Pelé as one in a class of his own. ‘The game is an art and only those with the artistic skills can play it to perfection’, the writer continues. Samuel’s above title says, partly, ‘. . . ready to Samba in Brazil’. www.dajjiworld.com (2014) concurs, using the title, ‘It’s Samba time! Football World Cup kicks-off’. In effect, the Daily Mail (2014) caption, ‘England arrive in Brazil under protection but still dancing to the rhythm of a samba beat’, showcased the unique cultural trait. Speaking of Samba, CNN (2012) did a story on the cultural dance stemming from the estimated four million slaves brought to Brazil over a 300-year period.

In Brazil, carnival is celebrated throughout the country. Notably embedded in the cultural celebration is samba which is manifested in diverse forms of music and dance. Samba, as a cultural trait, began in a Catholic church (Our Lady of the Rosary) built by slaves in the 1700s. The church was so ordered by slave masters who wanted the slaves to convert to Catholicism. The black people (slaves) were part of this congregation; most of them came from Congo. Cable News Network (CNN) ascribes to Joao Carlos Desales as saying, ‘So when they were able to organize a celebration they would choose a man and a woman to be king or queen of Congo’.

Instagram and Facebook Make Gains

The African diaspora relies on a thriving social media infrastructure to communicate with African populations. Not surprising, Instagram and Facebook have continued to make gains in Africa. Wronski and Goldstuck (2016) of Fuseware describe the growth of social media in South Africa. In 2015, Instagram once again grabbed headlines as a result of its growth, but Facebook shared the spoils by making gains as well. quarter of the population, while Instagram has seen the fastest growth of any social network in the country since 2014. In the meantime, Facebook has grown by eight percent from thirteen million, and Twitter by twelve percent from seven million. YouTube increased its base by fifteen percent from eight million. Instagram has led social media’s growth by 133 percent. Recognizing social media’s penetration into Africa and broadening acceptance among African populations, brands are harnessing their products to reach consumers. Even the diaspora communities have taken note when considering goods and services intended for citizens on the continent. At least 42 percent of major brands in South Africa are using social media. Mr. Price and Mercedez take the lead. Instagram is already the big winner among users, hence brands take advantage of the enthusiasm and affinity.

According to the 2016 South African Social Media Media Landscape, social media applications (apps) have dominated free downloads on all three major app stores in South Africa. They are Google Play for Android, the Apple Store for iOS and the Windows Store. Facebook dominates downloads on iOS, followed by Facebook Messenger and Instagram.

‘The occasional utility app does intrude in the list of most download paid apps’, conclude Wronski and Goldstuck. The authors argue professional and business users of smartphones want to combine their social and work lives on their handsets.

It is true that learning is not static. Nor is the use of social media in light of constantly evolving information technology during the exciting age of globalization. The African diaspora is actively conducting social media training and workshops on the continent. A social media week (the first of its kind) was held in Lagos (Nigeria) on 18-22 February 2013, under the theme, ‘Who Needs the African Diaspora?’ Two groups, one, Vote or Quench, and the other, Sleeves up Nigeria, organized the interactive debate on the relevance of the African diaspora. www.facebook.com summarizes the purpose of the weeks’ event as a social media international conference to communicate with Africa and about Africa. The event brought together leaders from other African countries to discuss social media and to communicate with the African diaspora. A demonstration of the Google Moderator, an online platform, enabled homeland Africans and the African diaspora communities to participate in the activities of the social media week.

South of the African continent, the Ugandan Diaspora Social Networking Event was held in Kampala in December 2013. The organizers used Facebook to promote the event and to complete registration. Often described as the “Pearl of Africa,” the event aimed at connecting the Ugandan diaspora with their homeland. Participants stressed the importance of online cash remittances that form the second largest source of income in Uganda.

Higher education provides studies on African diaspora. The University of Texas at Austin (US) held a conference on 3-6 April 2014 on ‘African Diasporas: Old and New’, to establish a worldwide interdisciplinary dialogue on Africans’ historical and contemporary perspectives and their use of social media. Another aim of the conference was to bring together scholars representing several disciplines to share information on the use of social media in teaching and doing research on the African diaspora. Conference topics included Transnational, Immigration, and Citizenship; Religion and Culture; Creolization in the African Diaspora; Slavery and the Diaspora; and New Media and Social Media in the African Diaspora.

Ayalew (2017), in ‘Africa in Social Media Age: Looking into the Prospect and Challenges’, recognizes the evolving power of social media for public participation and engagement compared to conventional media. The author acknowledges that, social media enable populations in Africa to seek information, mobilize interest groups, create user-generated content and share views. In particular, more youth use social media as a means to facilitate interaction and information-sharing. Ayalew advocates capitalizing on social media to permit African populations and the diaspora to communicate within and without.

Strengthening Social Media

It is true that learning is not static. Nor is the use of social media in light of constantly emerging information technology in the modern age of globalization. The African diaspora is actively carrying out social media training initiatives and workshops on the continent. A

social media week (the first of its kind) was held in Lagos (Nigeria) on 18-22 February 2013 under the theme, ‘Who Needs the African Diaspora’?

An enlightening debate was organized in Nigeria by two groups, Vote or Quench and Sleeves, on the relevance of the African diaspora. www.facebook.com summarizes the purpose of the weeks’ event as an international social media conference to communicate with Africa and about Africa. The event brought together leaders from other African countries to discuss social media and to communicate with the African diaspora. A demonstration of the Google Moderator (online platform) made it possible for homeland Africans and the African diaspora communities to participate in the activities of the social media week.

South of the continent, the Ugandan Diaspora Social Networking Event was held in Kampala in December 2013. The organizers used Facebook to promote the event and to complete registration. Often described as “Pearl of Africa,” the event connected the Ugandan diaspora with their homeland. Participants stressed the importance of online cash remittances that form the second largest source of income in Uganda.

Higher education promotes studies on the African diaspora. The University of Texas at Austin (US) held a conference on 3-6 April 2014, on ‘African Diasporas: Old and New’, to establish a worldwide interdisciplinary dialogue on Africa and Africans on historical and contemporary perspectives using social media. Another aim of the conference was to bring together scholars representing a variety of disciplines to share information on the use of social media and online information technology in teaching content and conducting research on the African diaspora. Conference topics included Transnational, Immigration, and Citizenship; Religion and Culture; Creolization in the African Diaspora; Slavery and the Diaspora; and New Media and Social Media in the African Diaspora.

Ayalew (2017), in ‘Africa in Social Media Age: Looking into the Prospect and Challenges’, recognizes the power of social media vis-à-vis conventional forms of communication for use in public participation and promoting engagement. The author is aware social media enables populations in Africa to seek information, mobilize interest groups, create user-generated content and share views or opinions. Notable, too, is that more youth use social media as a means to facilitate interaction and information-sharing. Ayalew welcomes African Diaspora’s use of social media. By the same token, the writer advocates use of social media among African populations and the diaspora to communicate within and without.

Conclusion

Despite the pejorative and demeaning categorization as the dark continent, countries of Africa have not given up pursuing development. African populations and the African diaspora continuously to take advantage of information technology in a global society. This explains why Africa has embarked on establishing a social media infrastructure to exploit, say, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Skype, Instagram and Messenger. And since it takes two parties to engage in constructive communication, the African diaspora communities have

seized on the importance of social media and are sparing no efforts to harness them to communicate with the mother continent.

According to Hammond (2012), about two billion dollars in online remittances were sent to Somalia that year, and about 200 million dollars directed toward humanitarian aid and development. Hammond alludes to mobile phones, e-banking and social media that have revolutionized the ability to support and maintain connections with communities of origin. The African diaspora is actively conducting social media training and workshops on the continent. Hence, a social media week was held in Lagos (Nigeria) on 18-22 February 2013, under the theme, ‘Who Needs the African Diaspora’?

populations have a genuine yearning for their homeland. They harbor an insatiable desire to communicate with Africans, despite that this may sometimes be reflective or imaginary or even virtual. For descendants of Africans who were forcibly uprooted by the cruelty of slavery, virtual conceptualizations persist of what would be “home,” or simply creating fondness, intimacy and belonging.

Other Africans left the continent to pursue greener pastures and have resettled mainly in Europe and North America. For some, Africa still controls the heartbeat in them. They use social media to communicate with the homeland. Likewise, they form associations intended to keep them abreast with happenings in Africa and to share information using online platforms. But Genet (2013), writing for the Huffington Post under the headline, ‘Beyond Outrage: How the African Diaspora Can Support Migrant Worker Rights in the Middle East’, reports on protests by Ethiopians at Saudi Embassies around the world.

The African diaspora has left no stone unturned in demonstrating its love and affinity to the mother continent via social media. This is partly exemplified by a steady flow of cash remittances during disaster or national development projects. In several instances, these online remittances are made with lightning speed thanks to social media capability, usually beating conventional transmissions by NGOs and governments. Additionally, the African diaspora has formed social media communities in their new homelands to discuss and share ideas on communicating with Africa. They want to create a home away from home.

Above all, the African diaspora has just about stopped worrying about the undeniable ills of slavery, which was conveniently followed by colonialism. Nevertheless, the African diaspora communities have redirected their energies not to lament over population dispersions, but to nostalgia by exploiting the wonders of cyberspace embedded in social media. Fortunately, social media have continued to penetrate and increase the use of social media into urban and far-flung hinterlands of Africa. Hence, there will be increased use of social media so long as culture and nostalgia are mutually inclusive.

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