

SOCIAL MEDIA DIPLOMACY AND FOREIGN POLICY EFFECTIVENESS: AN ASSESSMENT OF NIGERIA'S DIGITAL ENGAGEMENT WITH THE AFRICAN DIASPORA

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ABSTRACT

The emergence of digital communication technologies has fundamentally transformed the conduct of diplomacy, enabling states to interact directly with foreign publics and diaspora communities through social media and other online platforms. For Nigeria, whose diaspora population constitutes a significant source of economic, political, and cultural influence, social media diplomacy offers a strategic avenue for advancing foreign policy objectives and strengthening transnational engagement. This article examines the extent to which Nigeria utilizes social media platforms to engage the African diaspora and assesses the implications of such engagement for foreign policy effectiveness. Drawing on soft power theory and network society theory, the study employs a qualitative approach based on documentary analysis of policy documents, diplomatic communications, and contemporary literature on digital diplomacy. The findings suggest that social media platforms have enhanced communication between Nigerian foreign policy institutions and diaspora communities by facilitating information dissemination, public diplomacy, and crisis communication. However, challenges such as institutional fragmentation, inconsistent digital strategies, misinformation, cybersecurity concerns, and inadequate technological capacity continue to

constrain the effectiveness of Nigeria's digital diplomacy efforts. The study concludes that a comprehensive digital diaspora engagement framework is necessary to maximize the potential of social media diplomacy in advancing Nigeria's international image and foreign policy interests. The study therefore recommends the development of a coordinated national digital diplomacy strategy, strengthened institutional capacity, and enhanced investment in digital infrastructure to improve engagement with diaspora communities and support the achievement of Nigeria's foreign policy objectives in the digital era.

Keywords: Digital Diplomacy, Social Media Diplomacy, Diaspora Engagement, Foreign Policy Effectiveness, Nigeria.

1.1 Introduction

The advancement of information and communication technologies (ICTs) has profoundly reshaped the conduct of international relations and diplomatic practice in the twenty-first century. The rapid expansion of digital technologies, particularly social media platforms, has transformed how governments communicate, formulate, and implement foreign policy by enabling instantaneous interaction with international audiences. Unlike conventional diplomacy, which primarily depended on face-to-face negotiations, diplomatic correspondence, and closed institutional channels, contemporary diplomacy increasingly relies on digital platforms to facilitate public engagement, policy communication, and international cooperation. This technological transformation has contributed to the emergence of digital diplomacy as an essential instrument for achieving foreign policy objectives within an increasingly interconnected global system (Bjola & Holmes, 2023).

Digital diplomacy encompasses more than the use of digital technologies for official communication; it represents the strategic integration of digital tools into the planning, implementation, and promotion of foreign policy. Governments now

employ official websites, virtual communication technologies, and social networking platforms to disseminate policy information, strengthen diplomatic relations, manage international crises, and engage foreign publics and diaspora communities more effectively. These developments have broadened the scope of diplomacy by creating opportunities for governments to communicate directly with multiple stakeholders, including international organizations, civil society, private institutions, and citizens across national borders (Manor, 2023).

Within this evolving diplomatic landscape, social media diplomacy has become one of the most influential dimensions of digital diplomacy. Platforms such as X (formerly Twitter), Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, and YouTube have emerged as strategic instruments for public diplomacy, international image management, crisis communication, and policy advocacy. Their interactive nature enables governments not only to disseminate information rapidly but also to receive immediate feedback from diverse audiences, thereby transforming diplomacy from a predominantly state-centric activity into a participatory and multidirectional process involving governments, non-state actors, and global citizens (Pamment, 2022). Consequently,

diplomatic institutions increasingly depend on social media to improve transparency, responsiveness, and public engagement while addressing misinformation and maintaining communication during emergencies and international crises (Seib, 2021).

The growing significance of social media diplomacy also reflects the increasing importance of public diplomacy and soft power in contemporary international relations. Modern foreign policy is no longer evaluated solely by interstate negotiations but also by a state's ability to shape international perceptions, promote national values, and cultivate mutually beneficial relationships with foreign publics. Through digital communication, governments can project favourable national narratives, enhance their international reputation, and strengthen diplomatic influence by fostering attraction rather than coercion, consistent with the principles of Soft Power Theory (Nye, 2021).

For developing countries, digital diplomacy presents both strategic opportunities and significant challenges. Digital platforms offer cost-effective channels for diplomatic communication and international engagement, enabling governments to overcome many of the financial and logistical constraints associated with traditional diplomacy. However, their effectiveness depends on the availability of robust digital infrastructure, institutional coordination, cybersecurity capacity, skilled personnel, and coherent communication strategies. In many developing states, including those in Africa, limitations in technological capacity, policy implementation, and institutional readiness continue to

constrain the full realization of digital diplomacy's potential despite increasing investments in digital transformation (Bjola & Holmes, 2023).

Nigeria represents an important case for examining these developments because of its prominent role in African and global affairs, its expanding digital ecosystem, and its large diaspora population. As Africa's most populous country and one of its leading diplomatic actors, Nigeria has increasingly incorporated digital communication into its foreign policy practice to enhance public diplomacy, strengthen diaspora engagement, and promote its national interests internationally. Nevertheless, important questions remain regarding the extent to which social media diplomacy has been effectively institutionalized and strategically utilized to advance Nigeria's foreign policy objectives. Against this background, this study examines how social media diplomacy contributes to Nigeria's engagement with the African diaspora and assesses its implications for improving the country's foreign policy effectiveness within the rapidly evolving digital international environment.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The increasing adoption of digital communication technologies has transformed contemporary diplomacy by enabling governments to engage more effectively with foreign publics, diaspora communities, and other international stakeholders through social media and related digital platforms. As digital diplomacy becomes an essential component of foreign policy implementation, states are increasingly expected to leverage these technologies to

enhance public diplomacy, project soft power, strengthen international partnerships, and improve policy effectiveness (Bjola & Holmes, 2023; Manor, 2023). For Nigeria, whose diaspora represents a significant source of remittances, investment, expertise, and international influence, social media diplomacy offers a strategic opportunity to foster stronger engagement with citizens abroad while advancing national foreign policy objectives.

Despite these opportunities, Nigeria's digital diplomatic efforts remain constrained by fragmented institutional coordination, the absence of a comprehensive digital diplomacy framework, inadequate technological capacity, cybersecurity concerns, and inconsistent digital communication strategies. Consequently, government engagement with diaspora communities has largely remained informational rather than participatory, limiting the potential of digital platforms to support meaningful diplomatic collaboration and foreign policy outcomes (Pamment, 2022; Seib, 2021). Furthermore, existing scholarship has devoted limited attention to the relationship between Nigeria's social media diplomacy, diaspora engagement, and foreign policy effectiveness. This knowledge gap underscores the need for a systematic assessment of how digital diplomacy can be strategically utilized to strengthen Nigeria's engagement with the African diaspora and enhance the achievement of its foreign policy objectives in the digital era.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The broad objective of this study is to assess the role of social media diplomacy

in enhancing Nigeria's foreign policy effectiveness through digital engagement with the African diaspora.

The specific objectives are to:

- i. Examine the extent to which Nigeria utilizes social media platforms as instruments of digital diplomacy in engaging the African diaspora;
- ii. Evaluate the influence of social media diplomacy on Nigeria's foreign policy effectiveness, particularly in relation to public diplomacy, diaspora engagement, and international image projection; and
- iii. Identify the institutional, technological, and policy challenges affecting Nigeria's digital diplomacy efforts and proposes strategic measures for strengthening social media diplomacy as a tool for advancing the country's foreign policy objectives.

1.4 Literature Review

1.4.1 Concept of Digital Diplomacy

Digital diplomacy has become an important feature of contemporary international relations, reflecting the growing integration of information and communication technologies (ICTs) into the conduct of foreign policy and diplomatic practice. It refers to the strategic application of digital technologies, including official websites, social media platforms, virtual communication tools, and other internet-based technologies, to support the formulation, communication, and

implementation of foreign policy objectives. Rather than replacing conventional diplomacy, digital diplomacy complements traditional diplomatic methods by expanding governments' ability to engage with foreign governments, international organizations, diaspora communities, civil society, and global audiences in real time. The widespread adoption of digital technologies has transformed diplomacy from a predominantly government-to-government activity into a more interactive and participatory process characterized by rapid information exchange, public engagement, and multidirectional communication (Bjola& Manor, 2024). Through digital platforms, governments are now able to disseminate policy information, manage international crises, strengthen bilateral and multilateral relationships, provide consular services, counter misinformation, and promote national interests more efficiently than was possible through conventional diplomatic channels (Manor, 2023). Furthermore, digital diplomacy has become an essential instrument of public diplomacy by enabling states to project their culture, political values, and developmental achievements while strengthening their international image through attraction and credibility rather than coercion, consistent with the principles of Soft Power Theory (Nye, 2021). The effectiveness of digital diplomacy, however, depends on several interrelated factors, including institutional coordination, technological infrastructure, cybersecurity capacity, strategic communication, and the digital competencies of diplomatic personnel. In many developing countries, these factors continue to present significant challenges, limiting the ability of governments to

maximize the opportunities offered by digital technologies despite increasing investments in digital transformation (Bjola& Holmes, 2023). Within the Nigerian context, digital diplomacy has assumed increasing significance as the government seeks to modernize its foreign policy, strengthen engagement with its diaspora, enhance public diplomacy, attract investment, and improve its international standing. Nevertheless, achieving these objectives requires a coherent national digital diplomacy strategy, stronger institutional collaboration, sustained investment in digital infrastructure, and continuous capacity building to ensure that digital technologies effectively contribute to the realization of Nigeria's foreign policy goals in the twenty-first century.

1.4.2 Concept of Social Media Diplomacy

Social media diplomacy has become one of the most dynamic dimensions of digital diplomacy, reflecting the increasing reliance of governments on social networking platforms to advance foreign policy objectives, strengthen public diplomacy, and engage international audiences. It refers to the strategic use of digital platforms such as X (formerly Twitter), Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, YouTube, and other emerging social media applications by governments, ministries of foreign affairs, diplomatic missions, and international organizations to communicate official policies, promote national interests, shape global narratives, and interact directly with foreign publics. Unlike traditional diplomatic communication, which was largely confined to formal government-to-government interactions, social media

diplomacy facilitates real-time, multidirectional communication that encourages dialogue, public participation, and immediate feedback from diverse stakeholders across geographical boundaries (Manor, 2023). The interactive nature of social media enables governments to disseminate information rapidly, respond promptly to international developments, counter misinformation, provide consular assistance, manage crises, and strengthen relationships with diaspora communities and other non-state actors. In addition, social media has become an effective instrument of public diplomacy by allowing states to project favourable national images, showcase cultural heritage, communicate developmental achievements, and cultivate international goodwill through attraction rather than coercion, thereby reinforcing the principles of Soft Power Theory (Nye, 2021). Scholars further argue that the effectiveness of social media diplomacy depends not merely on maintaining an online presence but on the development of coherent communication strategies, institutional coordination, digital competence, and sustained audience engagement capable of fostering trust and long-term diplomatic relationships (Bjola & Holmes, 2023; Pamment, 2022). Within the Nigerian context, the growing adoption of social media by the Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Nigerian diplomatic missions has expanded opportunities for engaging the African diaspora, promoting Nigeria's foreign policy priorities, improving crisis communication, and enhancing the country's international visibility. However, maximizing these opportunities requires stronger institutional frameworks, greater investment in digital infrastructure and

professional capacity, and more strategic utilization of social media as a tool for advancing Nigeria's diplomatic objectives in an increasingly interconnected international environment.

1.4.3 Digital Engagement and the African Diaspora

Digital engagement has become an essential component of contemporary diplomacy, providing governments with innovative mechanisms for establishing and sustaining relationships with diaspora communities across national borders. The increasing availability of digital communication technologies, particularly social media platforms, has enabled states to interact with their citizens abroad more efficiently, facilitating continuous communication, policy dissemination, public participation, and collaborative problem-solving regardless of geographical distance. For many countries, diaspora communities have evolved beyond their traditional role as sources of remittances to become strategic partners in national development through investment, entrepreneurship, knowledge transfer, innovation, cultural diplomacy, and international advocacy. Consequently, governments are increasingly integrating digital engagement into their foreign policy strategies to strengthen transnational connections, promote national interests, and mobilize diaspora resources in support of socioeconomic development and international cooperation (Pamment, 2022). In the African context, digital engagement has assumed growing importance as governments seek to improve communication with citizens abroad, enhance regional integration, attract investment, and strengthen Africa's voice in global affairs. Nigeria, which

possesses one of the largest and most influential diaspora populations on the continent, has increasingly recognized the strategic value of leveraging digital platforms to foster stronger relationships with Nigerians living across Africa and other regions of the world. Through official websites, social media platforms, virtual town hall meetings, online consultations, and digital public diplomacy initiatives, Nigerian foreign policy institutions have sought to improve communication with diaspora communities, provide consular information, encourage investment, promote cultural identity, and facilitate diaspora participation in national development. Nevertheless, existing studies indicate that Nigeria's digital engagement remains constrained by fragmented institutional coordination, inadequate technological infrastructure, inconsistent communication strategies, limited digital capacity, cybersecurity concerns, and the growing challenges posed by misinformation and disinformation, all of which reduce the effectiveness of digital diplomacy in supporting foreign policy implementation (Bjola & Holmes, 2023; Manor, 2023). Furthermore, the absence of a comprehensive national framework for digital diaspora engagement has limited opportunities for sustained dialogue, collaborative policymaking, and strategic partnership between government institutions and diaspora communities. Strengthening institutional coordination, expanding digital infrastructure, enhancing technological competencies, and adopting a coherent digital engagement strategy are therefore essential for maximizing the developmental and diplomatic contributions of the African diaspora while

improving Nigeria's international image and advancing its foreign policy objectives within the increasingly interconnected global digital environment.

1.4.4 Foreign Policy Effectiveness

Foreign policy effectiveness refers to the extent to which a state's external policies and diplomatic initiatives successfully achieve predetermined national objectives, protect national interests, promote international cooperation, and enhance the country's influence within the global system. In contemporary international relations, the effectiveness of foreign policy is no longer measured solely by the outcomes of interstate negotiations or the conclusion of bilateral and multilateral agreements; rather, it increasingly encompasses a state's ability to build strategic partnerships, project a favourable international image, engage foreign publics, respond effectively to global challenges, and influence international opinion through both traditional and digital diplomatic instruments. The emergence of digital communication technologies has significantly expanded the tools available for achieving these objectives by enabling governments to communicate directly with international audiences, disseminate policy information rapidly, manage crises efficiently, and strengthen public diplomacy through interactive digital platforms (Nye, 2021). Consequently, social media diplomacy has become an important determinant of foreign policy effectiveness because it facilitates transparency, enhances governmental responsiveness, supports strategic communication, and fosters sustained engagement with diaspora communities, international organizations, and other non-state actors. For Nigeria, effective foreign

policy increasingly depends on the strategic integration of digital diplomacy into broader diplomatic practice, particularly in leveraging the country's extensive African diaspora to promote investment, encourage knowledge transfer, strengthen economic diplomacy, and enhance national reputation. Nevertheless, achieving these outcomes requires coherent institutional coordination, well-defined digital diplomacy policies, adequate technological infrastructure, skilled diplomatic personnel, and effective mechanisms for addressing cybersecurity threats, misinformation, and disinformation within the digital communication environment (Bjola & Holmes, 2023; Manor, 2023). Existing scholarship further suggests that states capable of integrating digital communication into their foreign policy strategies are better positioned to expand their diplomatic reach, strengthen international credibility, and generate greater support for national priorities in an increasingly interconnected world (Pamment, 2022). Therefore, the effectiveness of Nigeria's foreign policy in the digital era depends not only on the adoption of social media platforms but also on the government's capacity to utilize these technologies strategically to foster meaningful engagement with the African diaspora, strengthen public diplomacy, promote positive international perceptions, and advance the country's long-term foreign policy objectives within the evolving global diplomatic landscape.

1.4.5 Empirical Review

Recent empirical studies indicate that digital diplomacy has become an increasingly important instrument for advancing foreign policy objectives,

strengthening public diplomacy, and enhancing interactions between governments and international stakeholders through digital communication technologies. Across both developed and developing countries, evidence suggests that governments have increasingly adopted social media platforms to disseminate policy information, manage diplomatic crises, engage foreign publics, and project favourable national images in the international arena (Bjola & Holmes, 2023; Manor, 2023). Empirical research further demonstrates that the strategic use of digital platforms has improved governmental responsiveness, expanded citizen participation in diplomatic communication, and strengthened relationships with diaspora communities by facilitating real-time interaction and collaborative engagement (Pamment, 2022). Within Africa, studies reveal a gradual but uneven adoption of digital diplomacy, with countries such as South Africa, Kenya, Rwanda, and Nigeria integrating social media into their diplomatic practices to support public diplomacy, economic promotion, regional cooperation, and crisis communication (Adesina, 2022). However, these studies consistently identify institutional fragmentation, inadequate technological infrastructure, limited digital competencies, cybersecurity vulnerabilities, and the absence of coherent digital diplomacy strategies as major factors limiting the effectiveness of digital diplomatic initiatives across the continent. In the Nigerian context, empirical evidence shows that although the Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Nigerian diplomatic missions, and the Nigerians in Diaspora Commission

(NiDCOM) increasingly utilize digital platforms to disseminate official information, provide consular services, engage citizens abroad, and communicate government policies, these initiatives remain largely informational rather than participatory and are constrained by weak institutional coordination and inconsistent implementation (Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2024; NiDCOM, 2024). Furthermore, most existing studies have concentrated on digital governance, public diplomacy, political communication, or social media usage in electoral processes, while relatively few have specifically examined the relationship between social media diplomacy, engagement with the African diaspora, and foreign policy effectiveness in Nigeria. Consequently, there remains a significant empirical gap regarding how strategic digital engagement with diaspora communities contributes to the realization of Nigeria's foreign policy objectives. This study addresses that gap by providing a comprehensive assessment of Nigeria's use of social media diplomacy to engage the African diaspora and evaluating its implications for enhancing foreign policy effectiveness within the contemporary digital international system.

1.5 Theoretical Framework

This study adopted the Soft Power Theory and Network Society Theory, which together provide a comprehensive framework for explaining how digital communication technologies, particularly social media, have transformed diplomatic practice and enhanced the pursuit of foreign policy objectives. Soft Power Theory, developed by Joseph S. Nye Jr., posits that states can achieve desired

international outcomes through attraction, persuasion, credibility, and the projection of positive national values rather than through military force or economic coercion (Nye, 2021). The theory emphasizes that a country's influence is largely derived from the appeal of its culture, political ideals, institutions, and foreign policy, all of which contribute to shaping favourable international perceptions and encouraging voluntary cooperation. In the contemporary digital environment, social media and other online communication platforms have become significant instruments through which governments project their national identity, promote cultural diplomacy, communicate policy positions, and engage international audiences. Consequently, digital diplomacy has strengthened the ability of states to build trust, improve their international reputation, and cultivate mutually beneficial relationships with foreign publics and diaspora communities. For Nigeria, Soft Power Theory provides an appropriate lens for understanding how strategic social media engagement with the African diaspora can promote national interests, enhance international credibility, encourage investment and knowledge transfer, and reinforce the country's diplomatic influence within Africa and the wider international community. However, the theory also recognizes that the effectiveness of soft power depends not merely on the availability of digital technologies but on the credibility, consistency, transparency, and legitimacy of government policies and diplomatic communication.

Complementing this perspective is Network Society Theory, developed by Manuel Castells, which explains how

advances in information and communication technologies have restructured contemporary societies into interconnected digital networks that transcend geographical and institutional boundaries (Castells, 2022). The theory argues that power in the digital age increasingly depends on the ability of governments and institutions to access, manage, and strategically utilize information networks to influence relationships and decision-making processes. Within the context of diplomacy, these digital networks facilitate continuous interaction among governments, international organizations, citizens, diaspora communities, and other non-state actors through real-time communication and collaborative engagement. The theory is particularly relevant to this study because it explains how social media platforms enable Nigeria to maintain sustained communication with its diaspora, disseminate policy information, coordinate responses during emergencies, encourage investment, and strengthen public participation in national development regardless of geographical distance. Nevertheless, Network Society Theory acknowledges that the effectiveness of digital engagement is influenced by institutional capacity, technological infrastructure, digital literacy, cybersecurity, and access to communication technologies, challenges that remain evident in many developing countries, including Nigeria. The integration of Soft Power Theory and Network Society Theory therefore provides a robust analytical foundation for this study by demonstrating that successful social media diplomacy depends not only on the strategic use of digital technologies but also on governments' ability to build

credibility, strengthen transnational relationships, and effectively utilize digital communication networks to enhance foreign policy effectiveness and deepen engagement with the African diaspora in the twenty-first century.

1.6 Methodology

This study adopted a qualitative research approach using a descriptive research design based exclusively on documentary analysis to examine the role of social media diplomacy in enhancing Nigeria's foreign policy effectiveness through digital engagement with the African diaspora. The qualitative approach was considered appropriate because it facilitates an in-depth exploration of policy frameworks, institutional practices, and scholarly perspectives relating to digital diplomacy within the broader context of Nigeria's foreign policy (Creswell & Poth, 2023). Data for the study were obtained entirely from secondary sources, including official policy documents, diplomatic communications, government publications, reports from international organizations such as the African Union (AU), the United Nations (UN), the World Bank, the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), as well as peer-reviewed journal articles, books, conference proceedings, policy briefs, and relevant publications on digital diplomacy, public diplomacy, diaspora engagement, and foreign policy effectiveness published between 2020 and 2026. These documentary sources were purposively selected based on their authenticity, credibility, relevance, and direct relationship to the objectives of the study.

The collected documentary materials were analysed using qualitative thematic analysis, which enabled the systematic identification, classification, and interpretation of recurring themes, concepts, and patterns relating to Nigeria's digital diplomacy practices, social media engagement, institutional frameworks, implementation challenges, and foreign policy outcomes. The analysis involved a careful review and synthesis of documentary evidence to identify areas of convergence and divergence across government documents, institutional reports, and contemporary scholarly literature. To enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings, data triangulation was employed by comparing evidence from multiple authoritative sources, while the interpretation of findings remained firmly grounded in documented evidence to ensure confirmability and minimize researcher bias. Since the study relied exclusively on publicly available documentary materials, no human participants were involved, and therefore issues relating to informed consent were not applicable. Nevertheless, the study adhered to established principles of academic integrity through accurate citation of sources, objective interpretation of evidence, and strict compliance with ethical standards governing qualitative documentary research.

1.7 Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that social media diplomacy has become an increasingly significant instrument of Nigeria's foreign policy in response to the growing digitalization of international relations (Bjola& Manor, 2024; Manor, 2023). The adoption of digital

communication technologies by the Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Nigerian diplomatic missions reflects an important transition from conventional diplomatic practices toward more interactive, technology-driven approaches to international engagement (Bjola& Holmes, 2023). Through official websites and social media platforms such as X (formerly Twitter), Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, and YouTube, Nigeria has expanded its capacity to disseminate foreign policy information, provide consular services, communicate diplomatic initiatives, and interact directly with domestic and international audiences (Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2024; Nigerians in Diaspora Commission [NiDCOM], 2024). These developments indicate that the Nigerian government increasingly recognizes the strategic value of digital communication in strengthening public diplomacy, projecting national interests, and improving its international visibility (Nye, 2021; Pamment, 2022). Nevertheless, the findings reveal that Nigeria's digital diplomacy remains at a relatively developing stage, with significant opportunities for improving institutional coordination, policy implementation, and strategic communication (Adesina, 2022; Bjola& Holmes, 2023).

The study further reveals that social media has substantially enhanced Nigeria's engagement with the African diaspora by creating continuous channels of communication between government institutions and Nigerians residing abroad. Beyond their well-recognized contribution through remittances, diaspora communities constitute valuable diplomatic assets that support national development through

investment, professional expertise, knowledge transfer, technological innovation, cultural promotion, humanitarian assistance, and international advocacy. The increasing use of digital platforms has strengthened these transnational relationships by facilitating real-time communication, policy dissemination, crisis response, and collaborative participation in national affairs irrespective of geographical location. This finding supports the view that digital technologies have transformed public diplomacy by enabling governments to establish direct and sustained relationships with diverse international stakeholders rather than relying solely on traditional government-to-government interactions (Bjola & Holmes, 2023; Pamment, 2022). The study also shows that social media has become an important instrument for communicating travel advisories, consular information, emergency evacuation procedures, and official policy announcements, thereby improving governmental responsiveness during international crises and reinforcing the strategic relevance of digital diplomacy in contemporary foreign policy (Seib, 2021).

Despite these positive developments, the findings indicate that several institutional and operational challenges continue to undermine the effectiveness of Nigeria's social media diplomacy. The absence of a comprehensive national digital diplomacy strategy, weak inter-agency coordination, inconsistent communication practices, inadequate technological infrastructure, limited digital competencies among diplomatic personnel, and insufficient investment in institutional capacity collectively reduce the effectiveness of

Nigeria's digital engagement. Furthermore, the increasing prevalence of misinformation, disinformation, and cybersecurity threats within digital communication environments presents additional obstacles to effective diplomatic communication by undermining public trust and the credibility of official government information. These findings suggest that successful digital diplomacy requires more than the establishment of official social media accounts; it depends on coherent institutional frameworks, strategic communication planning, continuous professional development, technological innovation, and robust cybersecurity mechanisms capable of protecting national interests in an increasingly complex digital information environment (Manor, 2023; Adesina, 2022).

The findings also provide strong empirical support for the theoretical foundations of this study. Consistent with Soft Power Theory, Nigeria's use of social media demonstrates how digital communication can strengthen international influence through attraction, credibility, cultural promotion, and constructive engagement rather than coercive means (Nye, 2021). Similarly, Network Society Theory explains how digital communication networks have transformed diplomatic practice by facilitating continuous interaction among governments, diaspora communities, international organizations, and other non-state actors within an interconnected global communication system (Castells, 2022). Collectively, these theories underscore that foreign policy effectiveness in the digital era increasingly depends on a state's ability to strategically utilize digital technologies to foster trust,

strengthen collaborative networks, and maintain meaningful engagement with global audiences. Overall, the study concludes that although Nigeria has made considerable progress in integrating social media into its diplomatic practice, maximizing the benefits of digital diplomacy requires comprehensive institutional reforms, stronger policy coordination, sustained investment in digital infrastructure and human capacity, and a coherent national digital diplomacy strategy capable of enhancing engagement with the African diaspora while advancing Nigeria's foreign policy objectives in the twenty-first century.

1.8 Conclusion

The findings of this study demonstrate that social media diplomacy has become an indispensable instrument of contemporary foreign policy, offering governments innovative opportunities to strengthen international engagement, enhance public diplomacy, and promote national interests within an increasingly digital global environment. Through documentary analysis, the study established that Nigeria has made notable progress in integrating social media into its diplomatic practice by utilizing digital platforms to disseminate policy information, engage the African diaspora, manage crisis communication, and improve its international visibility. Nevertheless, the study reveals that the full potential of Nigeria's digital diplomacy remains constrained by institutional fragmentation, the absence of a comprehensive national digital diplomacy strategy, inadequate technological infrastructure, limited digital capacity, cybersecurity concerns, and the persistent challenges posed by misinformation and

disinformation. These limitations undermine the effectiveness of digital engagement and reduce the ability of foreign policy institutions to build sustainable partnerships with diaspora communities and leverage their contributions toward national development and foreign policy objectives. The study further emphasizes that successful social media diplomacy requires more than an active digital presence; it demands coherent policy coordination, sustained investment in digital infrastructure, strengthened institutional capacity, effective strategic communication, and continuous engagement with international audiences. Consistent with the assumptions of Soft Power Theory and Network Society Theory, the study concludes that Nigeria's diplomatic influence in the twenty-first century increasingly depends on its ability to strategically utilize digital communication technologies to project credibility, foster collaborative transnational networks, strengthen relationships with the African diaspora, and enhance the overall effectiveness of its foreign policy. Accordingly, the adoption of a more integrated, participatory, and strategically coordinated approach to digital diplomacy will position Nigeria to maximize the developmental, economic, and diplomatic contributions of its diaspora while reinforcing its international reputation and advancing its long-term foreign policy aspirations within the evolving global digital order.

1.9 Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Develop a Comprehensive National Digital Diplomacy Strategy: The Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs should formulate a coordinated digital diplomacy policy that clearly outlines institutional roles, strategic priorities, and implementation guidelines. This framework will promote coherent digital engagement and strengthen the integration of social media into Nigeria's foreign policy.
2. Strengthen Institutional Capacity and Digital Competencies: Government should provide continuous training for diplomatic personnel in digital diplomacy, strategic communication, social media management, and cybersecurity. Enhancing professional capacity will improve effective digital engagement and strengthen Nigeria's diplomatic performance in the digital age.
3. Enhance Digital Infrastructure and Cybersecurity: Increased investment in modern digital infrastructure and cybersecurity systems is essential to ensure secure, reliable, and efficient diplomatic communication. This will improve the protection of official platforms and strengthen the country's ability to address cyber threats and digital misinformation.
4. Promote Structured Digital Engagement with the African Diaspora: Foreign policy institutions should establish interactive digital platforms that encourage sustained

communication and collaboration with diaspora communities. Such engagement will facilitate investment, knowledge transfer, policy participation, and cultural diplomacy in support of Nigeria's national development objectives.

5. Improve Inter-Agency Coordination and Policy Coherence: Stronger collaboration among the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Nigerian diplomatic missions, NiDCOM, and other relevant agencies should be prioritized to ensure consistent digital communication. Improved coordination will enhance policy implementation, optimize institutional resources, and strengthen Nigeria's overall digital diplomacy strategy.

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