



EVALUATION OF THE SOCIAL MEDIA AS A WEAPON FOR COMBATING GLOBAL TERRORISM

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ABSTRACT

Terrorism, which has been seen as a serious danger to both global security and socioeconomic growth, is one of the main issues that nations throughout the world are currently dealing with. A climate of enslavement, imprisonment, and desolation brought about by terrorist activity has hindered cross-border trade, investments, peaceful coexistence, stability, and sustainable livelihood development. Proactive, reconnoitering, long-lasting, and indispensable intelligence gathering instruments are required to counteract this threat of international terrorism. This study explains how big data analytics, specifically social media analytics, can be used to gather intelligence on terrorists' or "terrorist" groups' activities, including membership, motivation, and operational methods. It also closes doors to potential funding, recruitment, and inspiration sources by analysing social media sites like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, and others. The study suggests using a variety of commercial and open-source social media analytics tools, including Sentinel Visualiser, i2 Analyst, and Gephi, as well as NetworkX, igraph, and Gephi, to enhance intelligence gathering. The report also suggests reviewing the different Big Data and social analytics algorithms to suit the demands of the modern global security watch.

Keywords: Social Media Analytics, Big Data, Big Data Analytics, Social Media, Global Terrorism.

Introduction

Terrorist acts constitute a form of violence that targets civilians with a biased and aggressive attitude. Additionally, it participates in unevenly violent battle with a stronger opponent, which could be a state or a coalition of states (Akins, 2017). Undoubtedly, in the modern day, one of the greatest risks to international peace and security is terrorism. Globally, the number of terrorist attacks has been steadily increasing since the year 2000. In several African nations, such as Cameroon, Somalia, Mali, and Nigeria, terrorism has in fact been apparent. The development of the Boko Haram insurgency in 2009 is one instance of how the phenomena manifested itself in Nigeria. Since they began their deadly attacks, terrorist organizations have remained the most obvious security threat to any nation, murdering thousands of people and destroying both public and private property across the nation (Zeng, 2019).

Terrorism hinders progress and is a major source of concern for governments worldwide. It appears to resist numerous counterterrorism measures implemented by various security personnel worldwide, much like the majority of terrorist organizations (Ahmed, 2016). The internet, which is powered by several platforms, most notably social media, was born as a result of developments that led to the death of distance. In virtual communities and networks, social media refers to computer-mediated tools or online platforms that let people, businesses, and organizations develop, share, or exchange ideas, career interests, information, and images/videos. Without a doubt, social media has permeated every aspect of human effort. Terrorists, however, are also using these platforms to spread their radical beliefs, find new recruits, educate existing members, coordinate with others across international borders, and collect money, among other things. Against this backdrop, this paper views social media analytics as an

essential counterterrorism tool to enhance intelligence gathering in the fight against global terrorism. This will be achieved by analysing social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube, among others, to uncover terrorist groups' membership, motivation, and operational methods, as well as by closing doors to sources of funding, inspiration, and recruitment.

Research Questions

- 1) What are frequently used social media platforms by terrorists groups globally?
- 2) In what ways can social media be effectively employed in combating global terrorism?
- 3) What are the effects of terrorism on global relations and development?

Significance of the Study

The findings of this research will be extremely helpful to nations and international security agencies in developing laws and policies that will make it difficult for terrorists to flourish. Additionally, the project will demonstrate how social media may be used to successfully report on insurgency operations through intelligence gathering on various social media platforms. Most importantly, the study's findings will inform future researchers conducting relevant research by letting them know what has already been studied. This will help them fill in any gaps in their knowledge and prevent duplication of effort. Additionally, the study will advance our understanding of what constitutes global terrorism, how to curtail, if not completely eradicate, its occurrence, and how local content methods are appropriated.

Literature Review

Concept of Social Media

Social media refers to the platforms that let people generate, share, and interact with content in a range of formats, including as text, video, photos, audio, PDFs, and PowerPoint. These platforms enable people to communicate with the public, other users, and their social network. (Cohen, 2011; Etumnu & Williams-Etumnu, 2023). Social media refers to the various platforms, services, and communication channels that facilitate the connection of peers who have similar interests. Users of social media can enjoy expressing and exchanging thoughts, as well as sharing and managing communications in a virtual community that is available to them at any time or place (Obayi et al., 2024). There are many different types of social media, ranging from social sharing platforms like YouTube and MySpace to social networks like Facebook and LinkedIn. The introduction of the World Wide Web contributed to the internationalization of the internet, and as its usage increased, social media—especially after 2003—emerged and became popular.

Sharma and Vij (2013) However, it's difficult to study social media without running into the phrase "social networking." Thus, both concepts are discussed. There are a lot of hypotheses on how social media originated. "Throughout much of human history, we have developed technologies that make it easier for us to communicate with each other" (Carton, 2009, p.1). The authors of this article were initially introduced to the concept of the telegraph in 1792, which made it possible to send and receive communications over large distances (Ritholz, 2010). German sociologist Ferdinand Tonnies and French sociologist Emile Durkheim, who is recognized as the father of sociology, were among the pioneers of social networks in the late 1800s. As per Tonnies, social groups can emerge from mutual conflicts or from members possessing comparable beliefs and ideals. His concept dealt with how society views the social compact. Durkheim combined practical research and sociological theory. In addition, radio and telephone were used by people in the late 1800s for social interaction, however radio transmission was one-way only (Rimskii, 2011, Wren, 2004). Social networks and social media have evolved throughout time to

become the modern iterations that use digital media. Social networking is not entirely new, though. Furthermore, the phone became involved before the computer did. The practice of randomly scanning the telephone network, which originated in the 1950s, is referred to as "phishing". Homemade electronic devices were used in this operation to give unauthorised users access to the phone system and the ability to make free calls. To finish their task, phreaks obtained conference circuits and test lines from phone companies. The first blogs and podcasts, according to Brett Borders, were produced by hackers who got into dormant corporate voice mailboxes (Borders, 2010). The broader population began using email in the 1960s (Borders, 2010). However, the general public did not have access to the internet until 1991.

Email was first intended to be a communication tool between two computers, but it needed connection to the internet on both devices. Email servers of today accept messages, store them, and make them available to recipients at their convenience. The Advanced Research Projects Agency (ARPA) of the US government established ARPANET in 1969. CompuServe, the third project of the 960s, was established in 1969 with the goal of offering time-sharing services via the rental of computer time. The ARPANET was described as a "early network of time-sharing computers that formed the basis of the internet." Many people thought that this service was too costly because of its astronomically high costs (Rimskii, 2011; Riiholz, 2010).

In the 1990s, a lot of social networking sites were developed. Move on, Asian Avenue, Black PJanet, and Six Degrees are a few instances (Ritholz, 2010). With the introduction of numerous social networking sites in 2000, social media saw a significant increase in popularity. This greatly enhanced and changed the relationships between people and groups with common interests in friendship, education, music, and movies through social networking. A few of them—Wikipedia, Cyworld, Six Degrees, Ryze, and Lunar Storm—were launched. Friendster, Sky Blog, Fotolog, and Last FM were founded in 2001, but Myspace, LinkedIn, Last FM, tribe.net, Hi5, and other websites were originally introduced in 2003. In 2004, well-known brands including Dogster, Mixi, Facebook Harvard, and Dogster started to appear. Large companies in the field, including YouTube, Yahoo!360, Cyword, and Black Planet, first appeared in 2005 (Junco, Heibergert, & Loken, 2011).

According to Daniel (2010), social media can be viewed as a broadcasting medium as well as a strategy, and because it is a two-way street that facilitates communication, it is hard to define. The definition might be the first: according to Cohen (2009), social media is still a communication tool that is frequently used to disseminate information to a wide audience.

Youtube

The world's largest online video community, Youtube, has been used by millions of users to discover, watch, and share original material since its creation in 2005 (YouTube, 2005). Apart from being a crucial medium for major and small-scale creators of original material and marketers, YouTube provides a global forum for individuals to communicate, share knowledge, and get inspired by one another. In November 2006, a year after its launch, YouTube was bought by Google Inc. in one of the most widely reported purchases at the time. YouTube has partnered with numerous content organisations, such as CBS, BBC, Universal Music Group, Sony Music Group, Warner Music Groups, NBA, The Sundance Channel, and numerous more (May 2005, YouTube).

Social Media and Terrorism

Individuals produce, share, and exchange ideas, photos, videos, and details about their hobbies and jobs with other individuals or with communities through social media, which are web-based or internet-based interactive technologies. Social media includes websites such as Facebook (social networking), Delicious

(social bookmarking), Stack Overflow (question and answer community), YouTube (video sharing), Twitter and Tumblr (micro-blogging), online wikis, message boards, and discussion forums. Social media platforms are extremely interactive and collaborative in nature, allowing users to swiftly trade content, publish messages and comments, and access a variety of online information sources (Adebola, 2019). Social media is becoming an increasingly important tool for terrorist organizations to collect money, recruit new members, spread propaganda, and gather intelligence because of its affordability, accessibility, and ease of use. According to Olu (2020), social media accounts make up over 90% of terrorists' internet activities. There are many instances of terrorists using social media to further their activities; in 2008, Jose Pimentel was arrested for fabricating bombs intended to target locations in New York City. Before being arrested, Mr. Pimentel was active on the internet. He ran two YouTube accounts, a blog, and a Facebook profile all dedicated to promoting jihadist propaganda.

An additional instance of social networking being utilised to enlist terrorists domestically is the December 2009 arrest of five people in Washington, DC, for attempting to enlist in militant groups fighting along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border. They would go on to become known as the Virginia Five, and rumour has it that one of the group's members liked a video on the internet showing attacks on US forces, which prompted a Taliban recruiter to call through YouTube (Sitlan, 2016). The Taliban is a violent terrorist group that has more than 7,000 followers on Twitter and was founded in May 2011. When they tweet, they use the account @alemarahweb. However, the account is currently on hold.

In December 2011, it was discovered that the extremist organisation Al-Shabab, which is based in Somalia, was using the @HSMPress Twitter account. Since the account's launch on December 7, 2011, tens of thousands of individuals have followed it, and they regularly relate to them on Twitter (Odua, 2018). It's also worth paying close attention to Nigeria, where Boko-Haram, the notorious terrorist group, has been utilising social media to interact with and inspire its supporters. According to Ndisa (2017), the most popular social media sites that they use to effectively disseminate their teachings around the world and convince gullible radicals of the virtues of their notorious and wicked beliefs are YouTube and Twitter.

Social Media Analytics

Unstructured raw data from social media sites like Facebook and Twitter is collected, compiled, and examined to aid in planning and decision-making. We refer to this procedure as social media analytics. It may also be referred to as an evaluation tool for big data informatics since it collects, monitors, analyses, condenses, and visualises social media data to extract insights and trends. Unstructured data includes things like emails, pictures, online logs, social network posts, sensor data, and other data that is growing exponentially at a rate that has never been seen before.

Social media analytics transforms user data into insights that can help businesses identify areas of customer satisfaction or complaints about their products through the processing, measurement, analysis, and interpretation of unstructured data resulting from relationships and exchanges between individuals as well as discussions of ideas and topics on social media. Social media analytics can be utilised to analyse and get insight into terrorists' actions on social media platforms. This could improve situational awareness by assisting Nigerian security services in locating terrorists and in providing early warnings and real-time notifications. That means that it could also provide Nigerian security services with a plethora of crucial data, including specifics of specific events and incidents, links between terrorist organizations like Boko Haram and the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) and their affiliated organizations, and even recruitment tactics.

Social Media Analytics: A Necessary Tool for Combating Terrorism

Globally, there are presently more than 2.3 billion active social media users; the biggest social media network, Facebook, boasts approximately 1.65 billion members, or almost 25% of the total population; just on Twitter, 100 million users log in every day. Additionally, these numbers are anticipated to increase as social media companies work to improve their offers in an effort to draw in more users.

Recently, Twitter introduced some simple and easy-to-use changes that provide users more alternatives to submit more complicated content. However, it is becoming clear that social media is a vital tool for both reaching a worldwide audience and serving as an internal communication tool for terrorists or terrorist organizations. Terrorist organizations including the Taliban, Boko-Haram, Al Qaeda, and the Movement Patriotique de la Cote d'Ivoire (MPCI) are using social media more and more to link with other Islamist groups and propagate their ideology. The group's official Twitter account was launched in January 2015, suggesting that it is drawing inspiration from groups like the Islamic State (ISIS) and Al Qaeda. The group has been using social media for more than three years to disseminate massive propaganda meant to undermine the morale of the Nigerian Army.

Examining and gaining access to massive volumes of unstructured raw data generated by various social media platforms could be one approach to gather intelligence for improving global security. In order to interpret and contextualise information accessed through social interactions among global audiences—particularly that which relates to terrorists or terrorist organizations—both developed and developing nations must accelerate their technological innovations and efforts in the area of social media analytics. The provision of diverse audience-provided information will prove advantageous to global security agencies, as it will facilitate the acquisition of copious amounts of data from these social media platforms, so augmenting their ability to procure intelligence and track the actions of terrorist groups.

Understanding the features, relationships, and data on social media platforms is essential for effective intelligence gathering, insider threat, counterterrorism, and situational awareness. Social media analytics can be an essential tool in the fight against terrorism. It can be used to proactively track, examine, and locate extremist social media networks as well as the websites and other digital properties that are linked to them. Having a plethora of information on terrorists or terrorist organizations, whether stated directly or indirectly, could be helpful. Ojo (2019) lists several open-source social media analytics tools at your disposal, including as SNAP, igraph, NetworkX, and Gephi. Both of these programs and the commercial utility Sentinel Visualiser require some software development. Global security officers merely need to start inputting data using these tools to assess, using either numerical or visual representation, the linkages between a suspected terrorist and its network of relationships in both a quantitative and qualitative manner. The networks that should be monitored include families, both close and distant; professional relationships (coworkers or the suspect's folder of business cards); involvement in social media sites like Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter; mobile phone records; and a variety of other connections.

Theoretical Framework

The democratic participant media theory has adopted as the theoretical framework of the study.

Democratic Participant Media Theory

In 1987, Denis McQuail proposed the Democratic Participant Media Theory. The press's elitism, its elasticity to political and economic forces, and the professional hegemony within the media hierarchy all contributed to the emergence of the thesis. This agrees with the submission of Folarin (2002) that:

The main thrust of the democratic participant media theory lies on its insistence that the existing bureaucracy as well as commercial and professional hegemony in media systems be broken down to guarantee easier media access for all potential users and consumers.

Anaeto et al. (2008) citing Ojobor (2002), give the principles of the democratic-participant media theory as follows:

1. Every citizen and member of minority groups has the right to access the media (the right to communicate) and the right to have the media serve them in accordance with their own needs assessment.
2. There should be no bureaucratic or centralized governmental control over the structure or content of the media.
3. The public interest should be the main reason the media exist, not the interests of media workers, organizations, or clients.
4. Local communities, groups, and organizations ought to have their own media.
5. Professional media that is large-scale and one-way is inferior to smaller, more engaging and participatory media.

The fact that both the study and the theory aim for media sector liberalisation in order to give everyone a voice in society makes the democratic participatory media theory appropriate for this research.

Methodology

The approach employed in this study is exploratory and qualitative, and it only uses secondary data that was obtained by examining pertinent academic and non-academic sources. The phrase "qualitative research methodology" describes studies that mostly employ interviews and observations in lieu of formal measurement, and do not attempt to quantify their results via statistical analysis or summarization. Conversely, an exploratory research approach is employed to develop a research problem for a more detailed or exact inquiry, or to use operational hypothesis.

In essence, methodology let the researchers analyse a phenomenon in a different way and clarify how they understood a problem. Furthermore, because exploratory research is used when problems are in their early stages, the topic or issue is novel, and data gathering is difficult, it is helpful in setting the framework for more comprehensive investigations like this one. (Odinaka (2018)). The research was inspired by historical empirical data and academic interpretations offered by organizations engaged in lethal acts of international terrorism. Social media was used by the organizations to spread propaganda, which included a lot of texts, audios, and videos. The purpose of this essay is to examine how big data analytics, namely Social Media Analytics tools like Gephi and igraph, can be used to gather intelligence in the battle against international terrorism.

Discussion

Terrorism is the biggest obstacle to world security and peaceful coexistence (Uwa, 2017). It has a very detrimental impact on the local population in the area where acts of terrorism are conducted. It's a quickly spreading phenomenon that keeps audiences and political leaders up at night. Through the global dissemination of messages to inspire their supporters and adherents, insurgent organizations utilize social media to further their vile and heinous deeds. They connect with other terrorist organizations in different remote locations using a variety of social media channels. The subsequent increase in the use of social media by terrorist organizations could be attributed to their failure to effectively employ big data social media analytics to gather, track, examine, visualize, and compile unstructured data resulting from

relationships and interactions between terrorists and terrorist organizations (Nduguba, 2020). Furthermore, it is possible to halt or significantly reduce international terrorism in order to achieve world peace, improve ties between nations, and obtain intelligence on issues pertaining to international security. Social media analytics may be used to accomplish this objective (Soto, 2020). The result will be the capture of terrorist organizations' enclaves and data. Social media analytics analysis can be used to get insights into terrorists' behavioral patterns, allowing security services to plan counterterrorism measures based on the prediction of their planned acts.

According to Nweke (2018), the media is well known for having a big impact on viewers, especially when it comes to changing audience conduct for the better or worse. The media is more effective at influencing the opinions of people or groups because of its integration with the internet. This suggests that knowledge sharing and exchange will continue to be supported by social media's connection to traditional media. As a result, people with dubious backgrounds could be caught quickly. To find unfiltered interactions and socializations across the various social media platforms, one must connect via massive data bases.

Findings

In line with the ongoing discussions, the following findings were made:

- 1) Terrorists and terrorist organizations actively use social media to spread information to their global network of supporters and followers.
- 2) It was also found that terrorists or terrorists groups use social media to propagate their ideologies while also creating an atmosphere of siege and desolation on the various global publics.
- 3) It was also found that terrorists or terrorists groups are visible threats to global security, peaceful co-existence and socio-economic activities.
- 4) Notably, it was found that both the developed and developing nations of the world have not been able to make effective use of social media analytics for the purpose of combating terrorism.
- 5) Additionally, it was discovered that many international security agencies are unable to "mine" the faster and larger volumes of data coming from terrorists' or terrorist groups' strongholds via various social media platforms in order to quickly obtain actionable intelligence that can stop the terrorists' or terrorists' groups' activities.

Conclusion

Terrorists and terrorist organizations have enormous opportunity to spread their thoughts to a global audience through social media. These messages, which are promoted via various social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and Youtube, help them recruit and welcome new members. The security of the world and peaceful coexistence are in fact threatened by this growth. Therefore, for a successful counterterrorism Endeavour, proactive, valuable, and durable information collecting is required, and this can be achieved through social media analysis.

Recommendation

Reasoning from these findings, the researcher recommends the followings:

- 1) Social media analytics and big data should be used wisely to change the way security intelligence is gathered.
- 2) Since terrorists and terrorist organizations engage in unstructured activity worldwide, the use of big data and social media analytics will aid in a deeper comprehension of this data for more informed and efficient decision-making.
- 3) There is the need to establish a customized campaign against terrorism that resonate with social media participants.
- 4) To identify the actions of "terrorists or terrorist groups," highly skilled individuals must be hired, trained in big data management, and given the duty of using social media analytics.

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