



OPEN ACCESS

EDITED BY

Hua Pang,
Tianjin University, China

REVIEWED BY

Bala A. Musa,
Azusa Pacific University, United States
Florenta Toader,
National School of Political Studies and Public
Administration, Romania
Gabriela Zago,
Federal University of Pelotas, Brazil

*CORRESPONDENCE

Chigozirim Ajaegbu
✉ ajaegbu@babcock.edu.ng

RECEIVED 02 March 2024

ACCEPTED 17 June 2024

PUBLISHED 10 July 2024

CITATION

Ajaegbu OO and Ajaegbu C (2024) The new democratisation: social media impact on the political process in Sub-Saharan Africa. *Front. Commun.* 9:1394949. doi: 10.3389/fcomm.2024.1394949

COPYRIGHT

© 2024 Ajaegbu and Ajaegbu. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the [Creative Commons Attribution License \(CC BY\)](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/). The use, distribution or reproduction in other forums is permitted, provided the original author(s) and the copyright owner(s) are credited and that the original publication in this journal is cited, in accordance with accepted academic practice. No use, distribution or reproduction is permitted which does not comply with these terms.

The new democratisation: social media impact on the political process in Sub-Saharan Africa

Oguchi Onyeizu Ajaegbu¹ and Chigozirim Ajaegbu^{2*}

¹Department of Mass Communication, Babcock University, Ikenne, Nigeria, ²Department of Information Technology, Babcock University, Ikenne, Nigeria

The integration of social media into political discourse is becoming the norm, facilitating citizen engagement and amplifying voices across the Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). This study centered on a literature review on the role of social media in political participation within the region. Through exploration across three databases, 50 articles were identified, with 42% of these closely related to the research focus and categorized under five distinct themes. Findings reveal various perspectives on the impact of social media on political engagement, with scholars offering different interpretations on its influence. Furthermore, majority of research underscores the role of social media in mobilizing protests and revolutionary movements driven by heightened participation observed in some SSA countries. Social media platforms are increasingly perceived as avenues to express opinions on pertinent issues contesting unfavorable government actions. Thus, this study posits the emergence of a “New Democratisation in Sub-Saharan Africa,” propelled by the positive utilization of social media in political spheres.

KEYWORDS

social media, Sub-Saharan Africa, political process, democratisation, political protest

1 Introduction

The media often referred to as the “Fourth Estate” plays a crucial role in serving as the public’s watchful guardian (Mintz, 2016). This responsibility encompasses the dissemination of vital information to guide public discourse and action within the society along with alerting when important events occur, as emphasized by the American Government (2021). Across various spheres of the society such as economy, science, education, health and politics, the media serves as a conduit between the government and the governed ensuring government accountability to the people.

The media in political matters need to stand neutral in order to place the needed pressure on the government when individuals clamor for change. However, within Sub-Saharan Africa, observations suggest a departure from this ideal, with media outlets both private and public, frequently exhibiting bias in political matters (Chatora, 2012). Hence, there arises a need for a neutral platform where citizens can voice out against unpopular governmental policies or decisions, free from intermediary influence or government coercion.

Historically, there existed bureaucratic control in the media landscape limiting access to a select few powerful entities. However, the democratic-participant theory advocates for media pluralism, promoting unrestricted access and grassroots involvement. The advent of information technology has revolutionized communication channels, ushering in an era of social media platforms like *Twitter*, *Facebook*, *Instagram*, and *WhatsApp*. These platforms have

permeated all aspects of societal engagement, contributed greatly in the daily lives of individuals (Valkenburg, 2022), providing individuals with instantaneous avenues to share opinions and ideas (Creevey et al., 2019) in real-time (Ajaegbu et al., 2022).

The introduction of democracy in Sub-Saharan Africa approximately three decades ago, remains fragile (Zamfir, 2021), with some democracies exhibiting autocratic tendencies. Zamfir (2021) explains that the progress of democracy in Sub-Saharan Africa between 1975 and 2018 is called the third wave of democratization. This democracy can be termed electoral democracy where the electorates have a right to choose the leaders in multi-party elections. Electoral democracy is characterized by rulers' responsiveness to citizens, freedom of expression and an election free of fraud and systematic irregularities (International Democracy Community, 2019).

Social media have been an enabling force driving positive change in democratic regimes (Igbashangev et al., 2023). The emergence of social media has empowered citizens to exercise their right to freedom of expression, facilitating the rise of new and unpopular political actors, and enabling advocacy for favorable government policies or redress against unjust treatment. Some studies have been done in different clime on the impact of social media in politics. In a study situated in Jordan, the authors discovered that citizens engage in political debates on social media and there is a correlation between using social media and engaging in political activities like voting, attending political events and expressing views on political matters (Alodat et al., 2023). In a similar survey study based in Cambodia, it was discovered that citizens rely on social media and it impacted their voting decision in the 2013 elections (Sokhan, 2014). Likewise, Keith (2023) with the use of secondary data found out that while social media amplifies the speed of activism with orchestrating protests and mobilizing support for critical issues, this will be more successful when digital participation meets physical participation.

The power of social media activism has not gone unnoticed by authoritarian regimes, leading to attempts at regulation or outright censorship, as evidenced by Nigeria's Twitter ban following the EndSARS protests of 2020. Nigeria has the highest number of internet users in Africa estimated at 103 million however, Southern Africa has the most internet penetration with 73.1% (Statista, 2024b). Though with the highest number of internet users, internet penetration in Nigeria is at 45.5% which is distant from Morocco with internet penetration of 91% (Statista, 2024a).

The influence of social media extends beyond activism to political campaigns seeking acceptance of a candidate. Such notable instances are the online presence established by United States presidential candidates Bob Dole and Bill Clinton in 1996 (Jablonski, 2014). Subsequent years witnessed further integration of social media with Barack Obama leveraging social media for fund raising in 2008 and Donald Trump harnessing Twitter for increased popularity in 2018 (Yildirim, 2020).

Beyond the United States, social media has left a mark on Africa politics with instances like a former Nigerian President's use of Facebook to engage citizens; also civil society groups leveraging social media for election monitoring in Zambia (Chatora, 2012). Also, in the 2023 Nigerian elections, candidates leveraged social media to gain public acceptance. The Labor Party (LP) presidential candidate gained heightened popularity using social media though not a member of the two major political parties in the country. This corroborates the assertion by Zamfir

(2021) that social media can mobilize voters and give smaller political parties access to voters. By examining previous research on social media's role in political campaigns within Sub-Saharan Africa, this study seeks to shed light on its potential to foster political participation, while also acknowledging the challenges that may constrain its efficacy within specific contexts (Chatora, 2012). Thus, this research aims to elucidate scholars' perspectives on social media's impact on political campaigns in the Sub-Saharan African region.

2 Methodology

This study adopted a thematic analysis approach which entailed a review of texts related to the subject matter leading to identification of patterns and developing themes. The study utilized three data repositories- Google scholar, Ebscohost and Scopus databases - with a timeframe of 11 years (2012 till 2023). The choice of starting from 2012 is prompted by the role of social media in the 2011 general elections in Nigeria, where a former president leveraged these platforms for political engagement (Madueke et al., 2017) marking a turning point in the region's political landscape. The search focused on articles related to social media impact on politics in Sub-Saharan Africa, using search terms like 'impact of social media on politics in Sub-Saharan Africa', 'new democratisation in Sub-Saharan Africa', 'social media and politics in Sub-Saharan Africa', and 'social media and political activism in Sub-Saharan Africa'.

A total of 50 articles were retrieved, with selections classified as similar, related and closely related. The screening process, conducted independently by the researchers, resulted in 21 closely related articles, comprising 42% of the total selected articles. The articles were then examined and classified under five distinct categories using themes from each article.

3 Social media in fostering protest/revolution

The first thematic category delves into the role of social media in fostering protests and revolutions, highlighting its potential to challenge entrenched power structures. It underscores platforms like *Twitter*, *Facebook*, and *Blackberry messenger* as instrumental in driving socio-political movements. Studies cited demonstrate how social media enables active citizen political engagement, although amidst challenges such as governmental distrust and attempts at regulation (Chatora, 2012). The study further pointed out the context-specific challenge of social media as distrust of the media by some African governments such as Uganda, Zimbabwe, Angola and Cameroon thus, trying to deprive citizens of their freedom of expression hidden under the umbrella of regulation of political space.

Czerep (2018) acknowledging the transformative power of social media activism emphasized the need for credible information dissemination and its active participants need to be aware of the nature of what is being shared. The author then concluded that while organized counteractions are clearly needed to control the destructive impact of hate speech, spreading fear, social distrust and false information, the parallel efforts and goodwill of authorities, administrators, authors and social media users are

needed thus, shutting down of internet which has become paramount among African leaders appears not to be the best solution.

Additional research shed light on the broader implications of cyber activism and political mobilization, framing them as catalysts for democratic evolution (Ezeibe and Ogbodo, 2015; Mateos and Erro, 2020). Through content and discourse analysis, Ezeibe and Ogbodo (2015) established how well cyber activism and satellite communication have transformed lives and institutions through re-establishing the relationship between human and power. In a study of Senegal, Burkina Faso and Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mateos and Erro (2020) discovered that the use of social media for political activism is dubbed the third wave of democratization. They discovered that this process will not be short term to bring about regime changes and new policies but long-term where the results will crystallize into processes of bringing in a new democratic culture.

The positive impact of internet accessibility on protest participation, as observed by Guffard (2022), underscores the growing influence of digital technologies in shaping political discourse. Conversely, Freyburg and Garbe (2018) opined that internet shutdown during electoral periods is a strategic manipulation of digital infrastructure by authoritarian African rulers through majority ownership structure. They add that election violence alone is insufficient to explain Internet shutdowns ordered by governments. Sebeelo (2020) highlights the transformative potential of digital technologies in political engagements in Sub-Saharan Africa exemplified by the organization of mass movements through social media hashtags. The study explained that these online protests pose significant threats to governments, prompting responses aimed at exerting control over digital spaces. On the other hand, despite different studies emphasizing the potential of social media in political engagement, Kamau (2016) in a study in Kenya discovered that though social media is a convenient platform to exchange ideas among youths, the level of civic participation is low implying a detachment and disengagement from political issues.

4 Leveraging social media for enhanced political participation and development

Some scholars have also considered the incorporation of the new media for enhanced political participation. Okoro (2018) explores the intersection of development communication and politics in sub-Saharan Africa. The author advocates for the integration of new media to foster democratic transformation with the current trend of political climate in Africa. The author further emphasizes the importance of incorporating mass media into national agenda to reinforce the effectiveness of politically informed and active citizenry, thereby promoting political and development communication. Again, the author pointed out that a non-supportive government can hinder effective contribution of mass media to development. Dzisah (2018) discusses the transformative potential of social media in political engagement, citing Ghana's 2012 and 2016 multiparty democratic elections as case studies. The study demonstrates how platforms like Facebook and Twitter facilitated democratic discourse and increased citizen participation. Thus, their study demonstrated the strength of social media in enhancing political engagement.

Adeiza (2019) studied the utilization of social media in the political process of new democracies in Sub-Saharan Africa, with a focus on Ghana. The study reveals how political parties used platforms like Whatsapp, Facebook and Twitter to coordinate and mobilize voters and also raise funds during the elections. Also, the author through an observatory participation research method, reported some of the negative consequences of social media platform as campaign tool such as jeopardizing of one's political career through posting of inappropriate platform comments. Also, the author further noted the specific limitation of the use of WhatsApp during this Ghana election as the lack of total administrative controls and minimal analytic data which increases the risk of bad-faith actors compromising campaign integrity by sharing sensitive information with opponents.

Kalyango and Adu-Kimu (2013) examined the role of online media in political mobilization across East and West Africa. Their study revealed how youths in the selected countries leveraged social media for political mobilization, driving social change and political engagement.

5 Relationship between social media and political trust

Akinola et al. (2022) examined the impact of media use on corruption perception and the influence of the salience given to the issue by the mainstream and social media on political trust. Their findings suggest that social media plays a significant role in shaping perceptions of corruption and political trust, with negative perceptions of corruption leading to decreased political trust.

Van Teeffelen (2018) analyses the relationship between social media usage and political trust across sub-Saharan Africa. While the findings showed a negative correlation, it underscores the importance of contextual factors in shaping this relationship. Furthermore, Awinia (2021) studied party politics and elections in Tanzania and the influence social media has made in the process.

6 Harnessing social media for election monitoring and accountability

Sassetti (2019) argues for the use of crowdsourcing in election monitoring as a catalyst for democratic growth in sub-Saharan Africa. The study, focusing on Kenya, Nigeria and Ghana demonstrates how the integration of social media with ICT enhances civil society engagement and shapes political processes. The impact of social media on electoral process and monitoring in West Africa using multiple case studies of elections in Nigeria and Liberia in 2011 was studied by Smyth and Best (2013). The study examined the broader media environment of the two countries, the social nature of election monitoring and the effect of social media on the perception of the election by the public of the two countries. The study suggests the potential of social media as an effective tool for election scrutiny in a coordinated civil society and its influence on public perception of the electoral process. Aduloju (2016) analysed youth socio-political networks on social media during Nigeria's 2015 elections. The study reveals that the youths who are perceived as passive in politics became more politically conscious and engaged in both constructive and destructive arguments with politicians. Thus, social media

transformed youth political engagement and discourse, thereby shaping the electoral process. However, the study also revealed several negative consequences of social media on political processes. The spread of misinformation was prevalent, often distorting public perception and influencing electoral outcomes unfairly. Cyber harassment emerged as a significant issue, with political figures and activists frequently facing threats and abuse online, deterring participation and silencing dissenting voices. Additionally, government surveillance and repression were critical concerns, as authoritarian regimes exploited social media to monitor and suppress political opponents and activists, creating a climate of fear that stifled political participation.

7 Social media as a catalyst for political change

Iwata (2015) posits that African political actors increasingly utilize social media as a means to engage with voters, enhance their political legitimacy, and exert influence. Their study adopted the concept of extraversion, reflecting the active involvement of political actors during critical junctures that could potentially bring about radical political changes in Africa. Their comparative analysis reveals a higher degree of social media activity in Anglophone African countries compared to Francophone countries. The study concludes that while social media's impact on information liberalization may contribute to long-term democratization in African countries, immediate political reforms may encounter hurdles.

Alfakoro et al. (2021) examined the influence of social media on governance building in Nigeria, highlighting its potential to facilitate citizen participation and promote transparency in governance processes. Nganje and Nganje (2022) observe that despite lower internet connectivity rates in Sub-Saharan Africa compared to other regions, digitization has significantly enriched the conduct of politics, and political discourse particularly by amplifying the voices of marginalized groups such as youths.

Social media is being used by political parties especially the emerging ones to reach wider audiences and garner more support for their candidacy. On the flip side, there is hate speech, intimidation of political opponents and also government restrictions of the social media. In summary, this study examined social media role in political participation across Sub-Saharan Africa, providing useful perspectives on how it may influence democratization and governance in the region.

In summary, the reviews highlighted several methodological strengths, including comprehensive thematic analysis, diverse case studies, balanced discussion of impacts and an interdisciplinary approach. However, the reviewed studies reviewed potential bias in case selection, limited longitudinal data, underexplored technological issues, reliance on secondary data and challenges with generalizability.

8 Conclusion

This study offers a review of literature on social media's role in the political process within Sub-Saharan Africa over the past 11 years. The findings are organized thematically to elucidate social media's impact on political participation and governance in the region.

The study hence concludes with the following assertions:

- The use of social media in political activities is becoming ubiquitous, signaling a new phase of democratisation in Sub-Saharan Africa. This is however still evolving as the social media has been used by some African countries in fostering revolution and protests though repressive governments stand as impediment.
- The total control of the internet and social media platforms by political elites and repressive governments in Sub-Saharan Africa poses a significant obstacle to citizens' exercise of their democratic rights.
- While social media platforms are increasingly preferred by young people for political engagement, political parties' utilization of these platforms for campaigning is still evolving and faces challenges such as misuse for defamation and hate speech.
- Social media in political participation demonstrates greater strength when used to facilitate citizen-driven political change and revolution within Sub-Saharan Africa.
- Corrupt political actors perceive social media as a threat due to its potential to expose their wrongdoings beyond national borders.

Also on the same note, some negative impacts of the use of social media for political campaigns as deduced from the literature are summarized as:

- Jeopardizing of one's political career through posting of inappropriate WhatsApp platform comments and lack of total administrative controls and minimal analytic data, which increases the risk of bad-faith actors compromising campaign integrity by sharing sensitive information with opponents.
- Experiences of cyber harassment, spread of misinformation, government surveillance and repression as noted by Aduloju (2016) and Ajaegbu et al. (2022).
- Social media as a catalyzer for inciting xenophobic feelings, dehumanizing, mobilizing of hate speech.
- Dominance of political emotions over merits.
- Political discourse becoming fragmented with coherent universal political narratives being replaced by self-contradictory messages tailored for specific segments of the electorate.
- Enables the creation of multiple truths as people freely discuss corrupt behavior among government officials and other politicians, leading to diverse and inconsistent public agenda.
- High exposure to political corruptions on social media undermines political trust (Akinola et al., 2022).
- It can also lead to misinformation as social media does not follow journalistic rules of vetting news hence manipulation of public opinion (Saaida and Alhouseini, 2023).

Therefore, it is important to note that the use of social media as a platform for political mobilization for civil society will continue to deepen the participatory principle among individuals in forging a new democracy within Sub-Saharan Africa. Irrespective of the some digital divide being experienced within Sub-Saharan Africa such as low internet penetration rates, literacy level, socio-economic disparities, it is imperative to harness the potential of social media for political mobilization and civil society engagement while promoting responsible usage to prevent reputational harm. It is crucial to note that while social

media engagement on political issues may foster awareness and discourse, its direct impact on actual political participation remains a subject requiring further empirical investigation.

Theoretically, the findings underscore the transformative potential of digital technologies in facilitating grassroots participation, amplifying marginalized voices and contesting entrenched power structures. This aligns with the principles of the democratic-participant media theory, which advocates for media pluralism and decentralized access to communication channels. The study offers empirical support to theories linking digital activism and political change validating that social media can serve as a catalyst for democratic evolution and regime transitions in Sub-Saharan Africa. On the contribution of the study to practice, the review offers insights for policymakers, civil society groups and political actors seeking to leverage digital platforms for civic engagement and other reform efforts.

Author contributions

OA: Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft. CA: Writing – original draft.

References

- Adeiza, M. O. (2019). Digital media and presidential campaigning in sub-Saharan Africa: A study of the 2016 election in Ghana. Available at: https://digital.lib.washington.edu/researchworks/bitstream/handle/1773/43655/Adeiza_washington_0250E_19656.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y.
- Aduloju, A. A. (2016). Youth networks on Facebook and twitter during the 2015 general elections in Nigeria. *J. Afric. Elec.* 15, 28–49. doi: 10.20940/JAE/2016/v15i2a2
- Ajaegbu, O. O., Ajaegbu, C., and Quilling, R. (2022). Nigeria EndSARS protest: false information mitigation hybrid model. *Ingénierie des Systèmes d'Information* 27, 447–455. doi: 10.18280/isi.270311
- Akinola, O. A., Omar, B., and Mustapha, L. K. (2022). Corruption in the limelight: the relative influence of traditional mainstream and social media on political trust in Nigeria. *Int. J. Commun.* 16, 1460–1481.
- Alfakoro, A. S. Y., Ismaila, Y. A., and Ayodeji, A. H. (2021). Social media and its impact on governance building in Africa: the Nigeria scenario. *Arab. J. Bus. Manage. Rev.* 11, 416. doi: 10.37421/2223-5833.2021.11.416
- Alodat, A. M., al-Qora'n, L. F., and Abu Hamoud, M. (2023). Social media platforms and political participation: a study of Jordanian youth engagement. *Soc. Sci.* 12:402. doi: 10.3390/socsci12070402
- American Government (2021). The Impact of the media. Available at: <https://courses.lumenlearning.com/atd-monroec-american-government/chapter/the-impact-of-the-media/>.
- Awinia, C. S. (2021). Social media penetration, party politics and elections in Tanzania - emerging practices and challenges. *J. Afric. Elec.* 20, 159–185. doi: 10.20940/JAE/2021/v20i1a8
- Chatora, A. (2012). Encouraging political participation in Africa: The potential of social media platforms. Available at: https://issafrica.s3.amazonaws.com/site/uploads/SitRep2012_15Mar.pdf.
- Creevey, D., Coughlan, J., and O'Connor, C. (2019). Social media and luxury: a systematic literature review. *Int. J. Manag. Rev.* 24, 99–129. doi: 10.1111/ijmr.12271
- Czerep, J. (2018). Social media dynamics as a new factor in African politics. *Hung. J. Afric. Stud.* 12, 160–170. doi: 10.15170/AT.2018.12.4.13
- Dzisah, W. S. (2018). Social media and elections in Ghana: enhancing democratic participation. *Afric. J. Stud.* 39, 27–47. doi: 10.1080/23743670.2018.1452774
- Ezeibe, C. C., and Ogbodo, S. (2015). Social media and political revolution in the Middle East: lessons for the seat-tight political leaders in sub-Saharan Africa. *New Media Mass Commun.* 40, 112–123.
- Freyburg, T., and Garbe, L. (2018). Blocking the bottleneck: internet shutdowns and ownership at election times in sub-Saharan Africa. *Int. J. Commun.* 12, 3896–3916.
- Guffard, J. (2022). Liberation technology? The impact of broadband internet on mass mobilization in sub-Saharan Africa. 31st European regional ITS conference, Gothenburg

Funding

The author(s) declare that no financial support was received for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

Publisher's note

All claims expressed in this article are solely those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of their affiliated organizations, or those of the publisher, the editors and the reviewers. Any product that may be evaluated in this article, or claim that may be made by its manufacturer, is not guaranteed or endorsed by the publisher.

2022: reining in digital platforms? Challenging monopolies, promoting competition and developing regulatory regimes 265632

Igbashangev, P. A., Abdullahi, S. H., Basil, A. T., Gbasha, C. T., Meshach, U. T., and Terhide, H. B. (2023). Social media as a tool for the advancement of democracy and good governance in Nigeria. *SSRN Electron. J.* doi: 10.2139/ssrn.4513869

International Democracy Community (2019). Varieties of Democracy. Available at: <https://www.democracy.community/stories/varieties-democracy>

Iwata, T. (2015). Social media practices during the political change in sub-Saharan Africa. *Ritsumeikan Annual Review of International Studies* 14, 47–72.

Jablonski, M. (2014). Social media in the 2004 election. Available at: <https://cphcmp.smu.edu/2004election/social-media/>.

Kalyango, Y., and Adu-Kimu, B. (2013). Impact of social media on political mobilization in east and West Africa. Available at: <https://www.globalmediajournal.com/open-access/impact-of-social-media-on-political-mobilization-in-east-and-west-africa.pdf>.

Kamau, S. C. (2016). Engaged online: social media and youth civic engagement in Kenya. *Digit. Activ. Soc. Media Era*, 115–140. doi: 10.1007/978-3-319-40949-8_6

Keith, D. (2023). The impact of social media on political activism. *Int. J. Human. Soc. Sci.* 1, 16–29. doi: 10.47941/ijhss.1429

Madueke, O., Nwosu, C., Ogbonnaya, C., Anumadu, A., and Okeke, V. O. S. (2017). The role of social media in enhancing political participation in Nigeria. *IDOSR J. Arts Manage.* 2, 44–54.

Mateos, O., and Erro, C. B. (2020). Protest, internet activism, and sociopolitical change in sub-Saharan Africa. *Am. Behav. Sci.* 65, 650–665. doi: 10.1177/0002764220975060

Mintz, S. (2016). The role of the media in politics. Available at: <https://www.ethicssage.com/2016/10/the-role-of-the-media-in-politics.html>.

Nganje, F., and Nganje, K. (2022). Politicking in the digital age: separating the hype from reality. Jo'burg, South Africa: Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa, 4.

Okoro, E. (2018). Development communication and politics in sub-Saharan Africa: analyzing Media's impact on governance and political participation. *Int. J. Lang. Lit.* 6. doi: 10.15640/ijll.v6n2a19

Saaida, M. B. E., and Alhouseini, M. A. M. (2023). The influence of social media on contemporary global politics. *Int. J. Res. Anal. Rev.* 10, 799–809.

Sasseti, F. (2019). Social media and crowdsourced election monitoring: prospects for election transparency in sub-Saharan Africa. *IAPSS J. Politic. Sci.* 42, 7–39. doi: 10.22151/politikon.42.1

Sebeelo, T. B. (2020). Hashtag activism, politics and resistance in Africa: examining #ThisFlag and #RhodesMustFall online movements. *Insight Africa* 13, 95–109. doi: 10.1177/0975087820971514

- Smyth, T. N., and Best, M. L. (2013). Tweet to Trust: Social Media and Elections in West Africa. Proceedings of the Sixth International Conference on Information and Communication Technologies and Development: Full Papers. 1, 133–141. doi: 10.1145/2516604.2516617
- Sokhan, S. (2014). Social media and its political impact: A case study of Cambodia 2013 election. Available at: <https://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:860507/FULLTEXT02.pdf>.
- Statista (2024a). Share of internet users in Africa as of January 2024, by country. Available at: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1124283/internet-penetration-in-africa-by-country/>.
- Statista (2024b). Number of internet users in Africa as of January 2024, by country (in millions). Available at: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/505883/number-of-internet-users-in-african-countries/>.
- Valkenburg, P. M. (2022). Social media use and well-being: what we know and what we need to know. *Elsevier* 45:101294. doi: 10.1016/j.copsyc.2021.12.006
- Van Teeffelen, R.L (2018). Towards an African spring? Exploring the relationship between social media and political trust in sub-saharan Africa. Available at: <https://theses.uhn.ru.nl/items/00d36df9-ffee-4c7c-8a5b-c979bfeb5288>.
- Yildirim, W. P. (2020). How social media is shaping political campaigns. Available at: <https://knowledge.wharton.upenn.edu/podcast/knowledge-at-wharton-podcast/how-social-media-is-shaping-political-campaigns/>.
- Zamfir, L. (2021). State of democracy in sub-Saharan Africa: democratic progress at risk. Available at: [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2021/690647/EPRS_BRI\(2021\)690647_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2021/690647/EPRS_BRI(2021)690647_EN.pdf).