



## X Ban and its Effects on Nigeria's Political and Economic Development

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### Abstract

X is an essential platform for information exchange, marketing customer services and remote work, especially during public health and safety emergencies like the COVID-19 pandemic making its ban in Nigeria impossible not to affect a wide spectrum of its subscribers and slow commerce, cut productivity and ultimately jobs losses aside from the internal and external political implications that accompanied it as well. Hence, the paper's objective is to ascertain the extent to which the X ban affected Nigerian political and economic development using the lens of small and medium scales enterprises (SMEs).Lagos state and computer village, renown for computer, mobile phones and other digital enabling devices in the sub-national unit of Nigeria, the business nerve center of the country, was selected as focus for the study because of the appropriateness of its features. Thedescriptive survey design was adopted for the research and the findings revealed that the suspension adversely affected Nigeria's political and economic development as it breached Nigerians' human right to expression, stained the country's national image, devastate the e-commerce businesses such as lowering profits and cut jobs which increases unemployment rate. The study recommends that the government should improve on human rights respect, and explore alternative dispute resolution measures while X embraces adherence to national operational rules and laws amongst others.

**Key words:** economic; development; human rights; political; X-twitter ban; Nigeria

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## Introduction

The emergence of social media has produced diverse changes for the broadcast media as well as become a significant force in political affairs, social interaction, and economic development. Twitter is one of the social media (others are Facebook, WhatsApp, TikTok, Instagram, Telegram etc.) applications that allows users to create a personal profile of themselves containing information such as their age, location, business or other interests. These personal profiles are always connected with family, friends and colleagues as platforms for sharing information.

Therefore, these connections create a network of users where anyone connected can view everyone else's profile and, therefore interact with them (Boyd & Ellison, 2020). But X, formerly known as Twitter, is not only prominent and famous among other non-conventional media outlets but appears to have acquired a global phenomenon and platform for knowledge, information and person-to-group communications, shaping lives, political discourse, social events, business affairs and other areas of human relations in very fascinating and remarkable ways. Likewise, it seems to represent a perfect example of the democratization of information and technology with demonstrable capacity to migrate communication to interactive dialogue, and social activation. This is evident as it being employed all around the globe for political campaigns and socio-economic enlightenment by political parties and the government of states. (Madumere, 2020).

Furthermore, aside from products and services business transactions online providing an opportunity for start-ups to commence businesses on a small scale, many Nigerians, like citizens of other nations, have honed their entrepreneurial skills to make a living through the window of opportunities provided by the X platform while some have become employers of labour (Morah, 2020). As a consequent, huge financial transactions have been conducted by individuals and organizations outside facial contact leveraging X's online medium. Banking transactions such as online deposits and transfers have made financial transactions easier. This informed Soladoye and Ojo, (2020) asseveration that X plays a huge role in the lives of many people and has become the official tool being used by formal and individuals to effectively and positively communicate with both the local and international communities.



Perhaps, based on the aforementioned blessings derivable from X social media, the announcement of its indefinite suspension by the Nigerian government on Friday 4 June 2021 was greeted with shock and resentment by some of her citizenries. Moreover, it came just days after X management deleted a post by the Nigerian President (Muhammadu Buhari) for violating the platform's safety rule. Before this, President Buhari in a series of tweets threatened Biafra agitators, saying those responsible for the destructions of INEC properties would be treated the way a secessionist group, Biafra, was treated during the Nigerian civil war.

However, since digital media like Twitter is essential for information exchange, marketing customer services and remote work, especially during public health and safety emergencies like the COVID-19 pandemic, it is almost impossible for the ban not to affect a wide spectrum of its subscribers. For instance, Iyatse and Adepetu (2021) assert that the suspension can slow commerce, cut productivity and ultimately cost jobs, while Nigerians in Diaspora Movement (NDM) stressed that banning X in Nigeria was an act of insensitivity considering the fact many Nigerians make a living through the site and have been proven to lift people, especially the youth, out of poverty through the acquisition and exchange of value-adding ideas (Sulaiman, 2021). This is aside from the internal and external political implications the ban might cost Nigeria as well.

Therefore, the ban is most likely to be accompanied by adverse impact on its users, such as social media managers, content creators, product photographers and small and medium enterprises (SMEs) leveraging the platform for marketing, customer service and other business activities, positioning their sources of livelihood at risk. Though these businesses could have moved to other platforms, their posts might not gain as much engagement as X provides. Against this background, this work's overarching objective is to ascertain the extent to which the Twitter ban affected the Nigerian political and economic development using the lens of the SMEs since they constitute chunks of its major users for business-oriented purposes and as citizens having an understanding of the nexus between the political decisions and economic implications and are also capable of providing information on its political effects. This article is divided into six



sections; these are an introduction, literature review, theoretical framework, research method, data presentation and analysis and conclusion and recommendations.

## Literature Review

### Brief History of X

X is a web application framework designed by Ruby Computer language with Ruby on Rails by Evan Williams and Biz Stone in 2006 after Jack Dorsey thought of creating a short message service (SMS) that will allow communication with a small group of people, (Proflerhab, 2022) though they were ex Google staff. It states further that the three partners began by first launching a podcast venture – a short message service (SMS) then referred to ‘Twitter’ in 2006 after forming Obvious Corporation with other members of Odeo and was incorporated as a company in 2007. The platform interface allows adaptation and integration with other online services (Akram & Kumar, 2021). In this sense, X appears to be born out of curiosity to enhance communication through modern technology. Nevertheless, the purpose the platform is deployed to serve today seems to be outpacing the founders’ imagination as it has become a pulpit for disseminating political, social, business and other tangible information.

### Benefits of Social Media

Social media, X inclusive, has become many things to many people, transcending only SMS communication channels. Scholars have identified many-sided socio-economic benefits derivable from the usage of these platforms globally. Some of the notable advantages are discussed in this article to situate the local effects of the Twitter ban in Nigeria– as a social media - within the global context.

#### i. Aid Recruitment

Specifically, social networking sites (SNSs) allow users to create web-based profiles where individuals can interact, using social media tools. Though initially designed for socializing with friends and family, these networks are fast morphing into an important professional tool, particularly in the field of recruitment. According to Broughton et al (2021), Twitter, like other



SNSs, serves two main purposes. The first is as a marketing tool through which job seekers' market themselves to potential employers and vice versa and as a screening mechanism for employers to transmit information cheaply and easily to gain a broader image, far-reaching than that of the traditional recruitment mediums such as print (national dailies) or electronic media. In this sense, job advertisement would attract job seekers across the world, widening opportunities, easing migration and contributing to foreign earnings accruable to countries, especially developing states like Nigeria.

Corroborating the recruitment advantages of X, Koch and Gerber (2019) aver that it is a recruitment tool, especially for advertising job vacancies and receiving applications. Beyond this, however, some employers and recruitment agencies have gone a step further to use social media to conduct initial interviews of candidates or for the first stage of the screening process.

## **ii. Improve Learning**

Schools and students have found social media, generally, a convenient tool to receive impact and share knowledge. Research affirms that social media enhance students' learning (Sharuna, 2021). However, on the opposite, X and other social media are perceived by some teachers and parents as distraction platforms that negatively influence students. But in today's digital world, Twitter's meaningful role in the communication of knowledge, especially at the higher levels, cannot be undermined because there is hardly any media outlet devoid of negatives or abuse. Hence, when used the right way, social media would enhance students' learning journey, making it much easier for students and educators to connect as well.

## **iii. Enhance Skills Acquisition**

The potential of social media for engendering skills acquisition for economic empowerment is another associated strength. Through social media platforms, users learn new skills, and in some instances, improve existing skills by collaborating with others, particularly colleagues in a given field. Moreover, there are sites for professionals like health practitioners, lawyers, teachers,



media workers and writers, where indeed career groups members interact to exchange ideas, explore new skills and knowledge for mutual growth and forums offering ample opportunities for economic empowerment through improved knowledge and skills (Onyejelem, Ude-Akpeh and Uduma, 2021).

Aside from users' skills development, social media also help in the grooming of a competent workforce for society, as ancillary and human resource development mechanism for nations.

Thus, individual users are empowered to build their wealth and improve their living standards alongside increasing society's degree of productivity.

#### **iv. Facilitate E-banking**

One of the biggest innovations presented by the digital age is the sophisticated widespread and diverse electronic banking products and services. Industries have evolved ways of using Twitter to initiate and complete their full business circle, from account opening to all forms of withdrawals and transfers, with minimal or no manual input. Also, in the banking industry where customers' interaction is necessary, digital media is becoming a strong communication channel between financial institutions and customers.

Social networks provide opportunities for banks, customer services, and products and services (Rahma, 2021). For example, in Nigeria, Nwabueze, and Egbra, (2021)(cited in Ackland and Tanaka 2021) posit that X plays a crucial positive role in achieving microfinance banking goals in Nigeria by facilitating information flow to the poor and small business owners who are their major target. As such, Banks deploy social networks to inform customers about their products, upgrade and interact or interface with them at the same time. Meanwhile, not only the banking sector uses Twitter handle but virtually all business outfits, projecting it as an economic significant handle.

#### **v. Medium of Marketing and Advertising:**



Business marketing or product advertising (persuasive messages aimed to lure consumers to purchase products or services based on their worth) is fast becoming more of the online affair than the conventional offline in which social media have taken a center stage. And as a result, there has been an increase in X usage that even the smallest of businesses can now create awareness of the products and services they offer. It affords buyers and sellers to connect at little or no cost, becoming a new vista of marketing and advertising opportunities in the contemporary digital world. Nonetheless, only those that effectively employ this can improve their business growth and profitability, optimizing X's imbued strength as a fortune-changing business information outlet, transmitted at the speed of light to people around the world. Ram (2020)

maintains that both businesses and consumers are using the media not to share information, exchange opinions and offer recommendations only but also to display certain consumption behaviour.

### **The Birth of X Ban in Nigeria**

President Muhammadu Buhari on Tuesday, 1st June 2021 made a post on X and issued a threat which was considered war inciting when he threatened to treat Nigerians "Misbehaving in the language they understand". This resulted in X deleting the tweet on the President's official handle @MBuhari. President Buhari cited the Nigerian Civil War experience, which he fought between 1967 and 1970, and noted that most of those burning electoral offices were too young to understand the gravity of war. The controversial tweet posted by President Buhari reads thus: Many of those misbehaving today are too young to be aware of the destruction and loss of lives that occurred during the Civil War. Those of us in the fields for 30 months, who went through the war, will treat them in the language they understand (Alexander, 2021).

Meanwhile, the tweet raised a global concern with millions of comments reflecting its condemnation and criticism. As a result, some Nigerians called on X to suspend the President's account, claiming the tweet expresses intentions of self-harm or suicide as stated on Twitter's usage policy. In response, X deleted the message, stating that it violated its rules (Njoku, et al 2021). In a swift response, Nigeria's minister of information and culture, Lai Mohammed,



accused Twitter of double standard claiming that other individuals and groups also make inciting tweets that were ignored by X and that the ban undermined the country's sovereignty.

But, according to X's safety rules, a user can violate its regulation if he/she promotes violence. The violence rule states that a user must not threaten an individual or a group of people, glorify violence, promotes terrorism or extremism, child sexual exploitation, abuse/harassment, hateful conduct, suicide or self-harm, sensitive media, including graphic violence and adult content, amongst others (Njoku, et al 2021). Many critiques of the ban reiterated that since Buhari is not the first president to experience it, there is no sound justification for the act rationalizing this stance with preceding world leaders with same, including, according to Eze et al (2021) the

former Presidents of the United States Donald Trump, Brazil Jair Bolsonaro, Iran Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, and Venezuela President Nicola Maduro. Following the government's ban on X in Nigeria, the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of the Federation, Abubakar Malami, directed for the immediate prosecution of offenders, directing the public prosecutors to take action. The government further asserts that X was allowing the spread of religious, racist, xenophobic and false messages that are capable of tearing the country apart (Nduka (2021), which seems to predicate the ban on the security threat the platform constitutes and rather not on President Buhari's breach of the rule aside from the statement being perceived as combative and impinging on the rights of citizens. The Nigerian users of Twitter expressed outrage at the blocking of one of their main outlets for social, business, political and economic interests. To minimize the effects, many citizens circumvented the suspension, perhaps to sustain their benefits, by using virtual private networks (VPN) to access the service, questioning the effectiveness of the ban.

Additionally, the civil liberty organization including Amnesty International (AI) and media organizations in Nigeria equally expressed disenchantments with the ban via reports, editorial and other means (Iyatse and Adepetun, 2021). This comes alongside using other social network platforms to condemn the ban by human rights activists, bloggers, social media influencers and some citizens (including Diasporas and non-Nigerians).



## **X Ban Implications on Nigeria**

The Nigerian government's ban on X has implications for the country. From the views and perspectives of analysts and scholars, it ranges from political to social and economic. While these major sectors are used to categorize or identify the spectrum of its adverse impact, there are sub-sectors within them with greater effects, informing or influencing the direction of this research focus. Therefore, this section of the literature review concisely examines these three intersecting sectors.

### **i Political Sector Implications**

Nigeria as a nation, like others, does not live in isolation making the foreign policy to reflect and practically demonstrate this fact. Hence, international relations or engagement in every aspect

has profound domestic and international impacts, especially emanating as responses from members of the international community. In the wake of the Twitter suspension, many foreign Missions domiciled in Nigeria took to their respective Twitter handles to express their disenchantment or dissatisfaction with the platform's suspension. For instance, the Swedish Embassy and High Commission of Canada to Nigeria in Abuja avowed that Nigerians have a constitutional right to exercise their freedom of expression and access to information, and must be respected.

Furthermore, the Embassy noted that this is the means to safeguarding a free, independent media and civic spaces for democratic voices that are an important part of Sweden's drive for democracy while Canada maintains that government should protect this right even in an attempt to prevent inflammatory rhetoric and hate speech that could fuel tension and conflict (Odotola, 2021). Implicitly, the international community picked holes in the ban as a flagrant abuse of Nigerians' rights (a dent in Nigeria's image) capable of having a negative influence on their relations with the country in all areas. Moreover, Nigeria's constitution and international human rights law, as set out in the Declaration of Principles on Freedom of Expression in Africa, protect the right to free expression and access to information, providing that any restriction to this right must be justifiable in a democratic society (Ewang, 2021). This strongly underscores the basis for the country's default in this regard.



### **i. Economic Sector Implications**

Another sector the Twitter ban takes its toll is on Nigeria's economy. According to NetBlocks, a watchdog organization that monitors cyber-security and governance of the Internet, each hour of the ban costs Nigeria about \$250,000 (102.5 million Naira), bringing the daily loss to about N2.5 billion (approximately \$500 million). Similarly, it affects the e-commerce market in the country, estimated at \$12 billion (Iyatse & Adepetu, 2021). This speaks volumes in an economy that survival hinges on private sector SMEs, more importantly in terms of tax revenue, employment generation and brown and green investment deprivation. For instance, as noted by Nwokoma (2021), the SMEs in Nigeria are vital to the growth of any economy, providing as much as 60-70% of the economy with jobs estimated at 117.4 million contributing 48% of the GDP, 96% of businesses, and 84% of employment.

Besides the financial loss, Bala (2021) (cited in Iyatse and Adepetu, 2021), an investment expert, avers that the ban sent a signal to international investors, making them worrisome about the sanity and security of the business environment. The suspension has already created a market access gap for millions of small business and medium-scale enterprises that use the platform to reach their customers. This could potentially complicate the challenges COVID-19 and other structural defects had imposed on businesses.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Technological determinism is employed to underpin this study. The theory was developed by Marshall (1962) with the assumption that media technology shapes how individuals in society think, feel, and act, and how societies operate as they transit from one technological age to another. It explains further that individuals also learn and think the way they do due to the influence of messages received through the current technology, making the culture of the society reflect the adopted new technologies. The theory predicts that with every new system of media technology, society will change and adapt to that technology. Using the radio and Television, as examples, requiring people to listen and hear and visualize respectively before making sense of it for everyday living, social media equally operate in the same manner. X, is one of the platforms engaged via new technology like a computer or mobile phones which, according to Hopkins



(2021) are digitally mediated communication software that enables users to create, share and view content in publicly networked one-to-one, one-to-many, and/or many-to-many communications, requires people to listen and respond, especially exploring it for personal benefits such as business or economic activities in the context of this study. The theory is a picture of a simple cause and effect analysis between the introduction of a new technology and the changes in the society's way of thinking, feeling, acting, doing or even believing.

## Methodology

This research adopts a descriptive survey design. This design is useful in collecting information about people's attitudes, opinions, experiences or habits through questionnaire (Kombo et al 2006). The study population covers mobile phones business owners in Ikeja Local Government in Lagos State, Nigeria. Computer village, as fondly referred to, is the largest market for computers and phones with their accessories having approximately 1, 500 SME business owners. Businessday (2020). The choice is predicated on the fact that the informal sector – housing computers with mobile phones and SMEs having 53 percent employment – contribute 65 percent to Nigeria's GDP (Onwo and Owazulike, 2021). Also, using Krejcie and Morgan's (1971) table for known population, 375 sample is used for this work as shown in table one, though 345 questionnaires was retrieved out of 375 administered (90 percent). To ascertain the reliability of the instrument, logical validity is employed whereby senior faculty members of the department of Political Science and International Relations, Caleb University review the questionnaire before its administration, validating its consistency as well.

**Table 1: Table for Determining Sample Size of a Known Population**

N	S	N	S	N	S	N	S	N	S
<b>10</b>	10	100	80	280	162	800	260	2800	338
<b>15</b>	14	110	86	290	165	850	265	3000	341
<b>20</b>	19	120	92	300	169	900	269	3500	346



25	24	130	97	320	175	950	274	4000	351
30	28	140	103	340	181	1000	278	4500	354
35	32	150	108	360	186	1100	285	5000	357
40	36	160	113	380	191	1200	291	6000	361
45	40	170	118	400	196	1300	297	7000	364
50	44	180	123	420	201	1400	302	8000	367
55	48	190	127	440	205	1500	306	9000	368
60	52	200	132	460	210	1600	310	10000	370
65	56	210	136	480	214	1700	313	15000	375
70	59	220	140	500	217	1800	317	20000	377
75	63	230	144	550	226	1900	320	30000	379
80	66	240	148	600	234	2000	322	40000	380
85	70	250	152	650	242	2200	327	50000	381
90	73	260	155	700	248	2400	331	75000	382
95	76	270	159	750	254	2600	335	1000000	384

Note: N is Population Size; S is Sample Size

Source: Krejcie and Morgan, 1970

### Data Presentation and Analysis

Data obtained through questionnaire administered on SME owners at the computer village at Ikeja is presented in tables and descriptively analyzed in this section. This provides evidence and premises for arriving at findings upon which the conclusion and recommendations are predicated. In the analysis, the percentages of the strongly agreed and agreed as well as strongly disagreed and disagreed are added respectively to draw descriptive inferences from the five-scale Likert questionnaire adopted for the research. Also, percentages between 100-70, 69-50, 49-30, and 29-1 are considered highly significant, moderately significant, moderately insignificant and highly insignificant respectively.

### Section 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

**Table 2: Gender Distribution**

	Frequency	Percent
Male	218	63.2%
Female	127	36.8%
Total	345	100.0%



*Source: Field Survey (2022)*

Table 2 shows that 63.2 percent of the total respondents are male while the remaining 36.8 percent are female. This implies that both genders were sampled, though the majority of the respondents are male

**Table 3: Age Distribution**

20 - 25 years	12	3.5%
26 – 30 years	95	27.5%
31 – 35 years	90	38.8%
36 – 40 years	94	15.1%
41 years & above	54	15.0%
Total	345	100.0%

*Source: Field Survey (2022)*

The age distribution from table 3 reveals that 3.5 percent of the total respondents are between 20 - 25 years, 27.5 percent are 26 – 30 years and 38.8 percent are 31 - 35 years. 15.1 percent, are 36 – 40 years while the remaining 15.0 percent are 41 years and above. This implies that the majority of respondents are active and mature businessmen, qualified to provide information for the study.

**Table 4: Educational Qualification**



SSCE/GCE/O'Level	119	34.5%
OND/Diploma	85	24.6%
BSc/HND	93	30.0%
Master's Degree and above	40	11.6%
Others	8	2.3%
Total	345	100.0%

*Source: Field Survey (2022)*

The educational qualification in table 4 shows that 34.5 percent of respondents have SSCE/GCE/OLevel, 24.6 percent have OND/Diploma and 30 percent possess B.Sc Degree or Higher National Diploma(HND), 11.6 percent own a Masters 'degree and above, while the remaining 2.3 percent have other certifications. This implies that the majority of respondents is knowledgeable and understands the implications of the ban on both the economy and polity.

**Table 5: Years of Experience**

0 - 5 Years	40	11.6%
6 - 10 Years	85	24.6%
11 - 15 Years	73	21.2%
16 - 20 Years	99	28.7%
25 Years & Above	48	13.9%
Total	345	100.0%

*Source: Field Survey (2022)*



Table 5 shows respondents' years of experience in the business, 11.6 percent have 0-5, 24.6 percent with 6-10, 21.2 percent have 11-15, 28.7 percent have 16-20 Years while the remaining 13.9 percent have 25 Years and above. It suggests that virtually all respondents are not just experienced but 89 percent possess six years and above denoting a high business skill capacity possession.

## Section 2: X Ban Effect on Nigeria's Polity

**Table 6:** X ban restricts freedom of expression in the country

Strongly agree	140	40.6%
Agree	174	50.4%
Undecided	7	2.0%
Disagree	17	4.9%
Strongly disagree	7	2.0%
Total	345	100.0%

*Source: Field Survey (2022)*

Figure 6 shows that 40.6 percent of the total respondents strongly agreed that the X ban restricts freedom of expression in the country 50.4 percent agree (amounting to 91 Percent agreed), 2 percent are indecisive, 4.9 percent disagree, while 2 percent strongly disagree (approximately 7 percent in total disagreed). The 91agreed percentage is highly significant implying that the Twitter ban restricted or violate Nigerians' freedom of expression right.

**Table 7:** X ban was a move against the human rights of Nigeria's citizen

Strongly agree	127	36.8%
Agree	130	37.7%
Undecided	41	11.9%
Disagree	22	6.4%
Strongly disagree	25	7.2%
Total	345	100.0%

*Source: Field Survey (2022)*

Table 7 indicates that 36.8 percent of the respondents strongly agreed that X ban was a move against the human rights of Nigeria's citizen. 37.6 percent agreed (74.4 in total agreed), 11.9 percent respondents are indecisive, 6.4 percent disagreed, while 7.2 percent strongly disagreed (14 percent approximately disagreed). The agreed percentage (74.4) falls under the highly significant category suggesting that the ban was a move against human rights or a gross abuse of Nigeria's citizens' inalienable rights.

**Table 8:** X ban projects Nigeria as a political risky destination for investment

Strongly agree	126	36.5%
Agree	177	51.3%
Undecided	26	7.5%
Disagree	10	2.9%
Strongly disagree	6	1.7%
Total	345	100.0%

*Source: Field Survey (2022)*



From table 8 interrogating whether the banned project Nigeria as a political risky investment destination, 36.5 percent of respondents strongly agreed, 51.3 percent agreed ((87.8 in aggregate) 7.5 percent are undecided, 2.9 percent disagreed, while 1.7 percent strongly disagreed (5 percent disagreed). 87.8 percent is highly significant underscoring that the ban threatens investors' confidence in Nigeria as a politically secured country for investment, which is a non-negotiable factor for investors – especially foreigners.

<b>Table 9: X ban affects the image of Nigeria in the global community</b>	Frequency	Percent
Strongly agree	142	41.2%
Agree	181	52.5%
Undecided	7	2.0%
Disagree	12	3.5%
Strongly disagree	3	0.9%
Total	345	100.0%

*Source: Field Survey (2022)*

Table 9 reveals that 41.2 percent of the total respondents strongly agreed, 52.5 percent agreed – amounting to 93 percent agreed -, 2 percent are indecisive, 3.5 percent disagrees, while 0.9 percent strongly disagrees—approximately 4 percent disagreed – that the Nigerian government's ban on X negatively affect the image of the country in the global community as human right



unfriendly and as non-compliant to the right charter agreement aside from other international implications. It is highly significant with approximately 94 percent in agreement.

### Section 3: X Ban Effect on Nigeria's Economy

**Table 10: X suspension slows commerce, cut productivity and cost**

jobs in Nigeria	Frequency	Percent
Strongly agree	157	45.5%
Agree	155	44.9%
Undecided	9	2.6%
Disagree	10	2.9%
Strongly disagree	14	4.1%
Total	345	100.0%

**Source: Field Survey (2022)**

The question on suspension's effect on commerce, productivity and job loss (5.10) shows that 45.5 percent of the total respondent strongly agreed, 44.9 percent agreed (90 percent agreed in total approximately), 2.6 percent are neutral, 2.9 percent disagreed, and 4.1 percent strongly disagreed (7 percent disagreed). By implication, the ban retarded commercial activities, reduce productivity and increase unemployment. This is a highly significant percentage – 90 percent – picturing the extent of its impact.



**Table 11:** X suspension created market access gaps for small and medium-scale enterprises using the platform to reach their customers

Strongly agree	127	36.8%
Agree	130	37.7%
Undecided	41	11.9%
Disagree	22	6.4%
Strongly disagree	25	7.2%
Total	345	100.0%

*Source: Field Survey (2022)*

Table 11 reveals that 36.8 percent of the respondents strongly agreed, 37.6 percent agreed (74 percent), 11.9 percent answered indecisively, 6.4 percent disagreed and 7.2 percent strongly disagreed (14 percent) to the question that the Twitter suspension created market access gaps for millions of small business and medium scale enterprises that use the platform to reach their customers. Implicitly, the suspension deprived many businesses access to customers with accompanying low sales and profit.

**Table 12:** The e-commerce market had a huge loss during the X ban

Strongly agree	184	53.3%
Agree	144	41.7%
Undecided	6	1.7%
Disagree	3	.9%
strongly disagree	8	2.3%
Total	345	100.0%

*Source: Field Survey (2022)*

As shown in table 12, 53.3 percent of respondents strongly agreed that the e-commerce market had a huge loss during twitter ban, 41.7 percent agreed (amounting to 95 percent), 1.7 respondents are indecisive, 0.9 percent disagreed, 2.3 percent strongly disagreed (3 percent). As such, it is highly significant that the ban hugely undermined the striving or solvency of e-commerce businesses, with attendant effect on stakeholders.

**Table 13:** small and medium enterprises, media managers, social media influencers and other online businesses are negatively affected by the X ban



Strongly agree	159	46.1%
Agree	150	43.5%
Undecided	19	5.5%
Disagree	13	3.8%
Strongly disagree	4	1.2%
Total	345	100.0%

**Source: Field Survey (2022)**

The question on businesses affected by the ban in table 13 shows that 46.1 percent of the total respondents strongly agreed, 43.5 agreed (approximately 90 percent) that various small and medium enterprises leveraging the Twitter handle for transactions are affected, 5.5 percent are neutral, 3.8 percent disagreed while 1.2 percent strongly disagreed (5 percent). It suggests that SMEs are destabilized in every business sense, especially in terms of profit.

#### **Section 4: Measures to prevent a repeat of the X ban**

**Table 14: Nigeria's leaders need to understand the importance of new-age internet applications to business sustainability**

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly agree	127	36.8%
Agree	147	42.6%
Undecided	25	7.2%
Disagree	28	8.1%
Strongly disagree	18	5.2%
Total	345	100.0%

**Source: Field Survey (2022)**

Table 14 indicates that 36.8 percent of respondents strongly agreed, 42.6 strongly agreed, 7.2 percent are indecisive, 8.1 percent disagreed and 5.2 percent strongly disagreed with the question that Nigeria's leaders need to understand the importance of new age internet applications to business sustainability. The implication is that Nigeria's leaders are insensitive or ignorant of the



strategic position of online platforms to business survival in the contemporary age, hence, should endeavour to ensure a non-disruptive atmosphere.

**Table 15:** Nigeria leaders should respect human rights, especially that of expression and access to information

Strongly agree	166	48.1%
Agree	156	45.2%
Undecided	11	3.2%
Disagree	8	2.3%
Strongly disagree	4	1.2%
Total	345	100.0%

*Source: Field Survey (2022)*

The question on the need for Nigeria's leaders to respect human rights of expression and access to information (table 15) shows that 48.1 percent of respondents strongly agreed, 45.2 percent agreed (93 percent), 3.2 percent are neutral, 2.3 percent disagreed and 1.2 percent strongly disagreed (3 percent), suggesting that Nigeria leaders should deliberately constitute the habit of respecting human rights generally, more importantly, that of expression and access to information.

**Table 16:** The government should look at the after-effect before shutting down Twitter or any application again in Nigeria

Strongly agree	197	57.1%
Agree	140	40.6%
Undecided	2	0.6%
Disagree	3	0.9%
Strongly disagree	3	0.9%
Total	345	100.0%

*Source: Field Survey (2022)*

As shown in table 16, 57.1 percent of the respondents strongly agreed, 40.6 percent agreed (97 percent), 0.6 percent are indecisive, 0.9 percent disagreed and 0.9 percent strongly disagreed (2 percent approximately) that the government should look at the after-effect before shutting down any application in Nigeria. By implication, the cause and effect of decisions should be



objectively weighed by the government before making them, especially regarding online application suspension or shutdown.

**Table 17:** X should always abide by extant laws or rules guiding social media operations in Nigeria.

Strongly agree	159	46.1%
Agree	150	43.5%
Undecided	19	5.5%
Disagree	13	3.8%
Strongly disagree	4	1.2%
Total	345	100.0%

*Source: Field Survey (2022)*

From table 17, 46.1 percent of the total respondents strongly agreed that X should always abide by extant laws or rules guiding social media operations in Nigeria, 43.5 percent agreed (approximately 90 percent), 5.5 percent are undecided, 3.8 percent disagreed while 1.2 percent strongly disagreed (5 percent in approximate). Hence, Twitter is expected to respect extant laws to facilitate smooth operations and minimize conflict with the government.

**Table 18:** Twitter and the Nigerian Government should agree on how to resolve future conflicts

Strongly agree	140	40.6%
Agree	174	50.4%
Undecided	7	2.0%
Disagree	17	4.9%
Strongly disagree	7	2.0%
Total	345	100.0%

*Source: Field Survey (2022)*

Table 18 shows that 40.6 percent strongly agreed, 50.4 percent agreed (91 percent), 2 percent are indecisive, 4.9 percent disagreed and 2 percent strongly disagreed (7 percent approximately) that X and the Nigerian Government should have a memorandum of understanding on how to resolve



their differences or conflicts, implying that Twitter and Nigeria Government need to re-formalize their working relationship agreement to forestall the repeat of the suspension in future.

## Discussion of Findings

Findings from this research are discussed to underscore their implications. In the second section questions aimed to know the effect of the X ban on the polity, respondents' data analysis reveals it curtailed freedom of expression (91 percent agreed); it is an abuse of human rights (74 percent agreed); it projects the political environment as unsafe for investment (88 percent agreed); and, it is a blight on the national image (93 percent agreed). Statistically, the response to the four questions is highly significant, strongly affirming that the ban has negative effects on the political development of Nigeria in both the domestic - judging from the human rights especially freedom of expression indicator- and international arena based on investors' perception and national image indicators. It is striking that this finding concurs with the submissions of Ewang (2021) and Odutola (2021) that the Nigerian government flouted the human right of expression through the X ban and should be protected even in an effort to checkmate its abuses respectively.

The second research question objective is to determine the effect of the X ban on the economy. The third section set of questions reveals that the ban slowed commercial activities, cut productivity and jobs (90 percent agreed); limited market access to SMEs (74 percent agreed); It

orchestrated a huge loss to the e-commerce market (95 percent agreed); and also, made the businesses such as social media influencers, media managers, SMEs (90 percent agreed), amongst others, to suffer business setbacks. While the percentages of the responses are highly significant, as well, it also underscores that the economic activities are badly affected with businesses suffering from poor market patronage.

The consequences of this on the gross domestic product (GDP) and employment are obvious, and cannot be overemphasized. It is noteworthy that this finding is in agreement with that of Iyatse and Adepotun that the ban adversely affected the e-commerce market, Nwokoma (2021) that the SMEs' capacity for economic growth is vitiated, and Bala (2021) that it sent a wrong



business climate signal to both the domestic and international investors. Besides, it validates the technology determinism theory assumption that technology shapes peoples' behaviour as it played out on how businesses and customers engaged Twitter for ease of transaction, marketing, employment and other viable purposes.

The fourth section captures questions capable of preventing a reoccurrence of the Nigeria government-X conflict. Respondents agreed that Nigeria leaders should shun the act of human rights abuse, especially that of freedom of expression (93 percent; government needs to understand the consequences of taking similar action in the future (97 percent); X should cultivate the habit of playing by the rules of the business game in Nigeria (90 percent); and, both the government and X should agree on means of resolving grey areas or conflicts to avoid outright sanction or ban again (91 per cent). Each suggestion is highly significant statistically indicating them as relevant preventative solutions. Moreover, they are also applicable to both developed and developing countries that may encounter similar experiences with X or any of the social media platforms.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

This study investigates the effects of the Federal Government of Nigeria's suspension of X on political and economic development. It discovers that the human right of freedom of speech was grossly violated and that it left a dent in the country's image as a non-compliant with the

international convention and a risky destination for investment. Also, the study discovers that the ban sharply affected e-commerce businesses and created market access challenges for stakeholders such as online traders, social media influencers and managers, amongst others, while the SMEs are devastated by the inability to run businesses smoothly leveraging the X handle platform.

Given these findings, the paper canvasses for the implementation of solutions (attested to by respondents in this study alongside deliberate redemptive national and international campaigns to reassure investors and international communities of a predictable political and business



environment) capable of preventing a reoccurrence of a similar experience by both the government and X, and by extension, other social media companies and national government, especially that of the developing countries or those characterized by limited human right of expression or abuses. These include cultivating the attitudes and political culture of respect for citizens' rights especially that of freedom of speech, renegotiating a better memorandum of understanding to guide operation or means of resolving conflicts and that X should respect the national rules and laws of the country.

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