



## SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGN ON HERDERS AND FARMERS CRISES AND INTER-ETHNIC RELATIONS IN BENUE STATE

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### ABSTRACT

This study assessed social media campaign on herders and farmers crises and inter-ethnic relations. This study was anchored on the Frustration-Aggression Theory. The study was based on the survey research method, while questionnaire served as instrument of data collection. The population of the study was 407,000 adult male and female residents in Makurdi metropolis. The sample size was 384 respondents. The study found among others that the social media campaigns have shaped ethnic consciousness among the Benue public by recognizing that Fulani herders are foreigners and invaders, that herders are historical enemies to crop farmers, that herders have an Islamic agenda, and that herders are protected by the central government. The study concluded that the social media campaigns have shaped ethnic consciousness among the Benue public and this has affected inter-ethnic relations among Benue people as the social media messages on herders' attacks have enhanced ethnic identity among Benue people, making people become weary of Fulani herders, did not trust herders and believed that herders are violent occupiers. The study therefore recommended among others that the atmosphere between farming and pastoral communities is extremely bitter and negative. Support should be provided for creative social media campaigns, radio and television to create new narratives showing how the interaction between the two groups could be peaceful and mutually beneficial.

**Keywords:** Social Media Campaign, Herders and Farmers Crises, Inter-Ethnic Relations

### INTRODUCTION

The rapidly increasing popularity of social media in the twenty-first century has paved the way for what Bruns (2014) calls a 'new ecology of emergency media', in which traditional mass media coexist with social media and messaging services, including SMS, in such a way that crisis communication (on a general level) cannot be effective unless it considers

all these media. Social media are important in how a crisis is interpreted, explained and understood by various groups of the public, and they can be vehicles for the formation of collective responses in the crisis aftermath (Kverndokk, 2013). In this respect, social media are tools for making sense of an emergency event. Social media to a much larger degree represent alternative framings and counter-discourses on how to assess and understand a crisis (Eriksson, 2016). Especially micro-blogging services such as Twitter have proven to be 'privileged as platforms for backchannel activity' (McNely, 2009), in which the dominant discourses of mainstream media can be countered and sense-making negotiated. Furthermore, when a major crisis such as a massive terrorist attack occurs, it is not obvious who the key communicators will be, or if indeed there will be any key communicators. The social media such *Facebook*, *Twitter* and *Instagram* are dispersed networks with no predefined dominant actors and a 'new logic of distribution' (Klinger & Svensson, 2015) in which ordinary users are important actors in the dissemination of information. Previous research has shown that highly motivated individuals with no prior experience with mass communication can gain significant roles as 'remote emergency operators' (Starbird & Palen, 2011) and that ordinary people can be 'crowd sourced to prominence' during a crisis. Social media like Twitter, therefore, have many similarities with discussion forums, which rely heavily on participation to function well. The Social media are used in crises and conflicts for different reasons and by several actors, such as affected citizens, bystanders, media as well as emergency services. On the one hand, social media can help with sharing useful information that might help to overcome the crisis.

Nigeria and her component units referred to as states have been riddled with one form of crises and security challenges or the other. This is evident in ethnic, political and religious crises. The attendant consequences of these anomalies range over wanton destruction of lives and property, assault, kidnapping/abduction, assassination, and general state of insecurity as well as social disorder (Nasidi, 2019). Dodo (2008) asserts that just like most African nations, Nigeria has been witnessing various social ills since the attainment of political independence. These social problems include: herders and farmers clashes, religious intolerance, ethnicity, sectionalism, apathy and indifference in matters of



national interest. So far, successive governments since independence have made efforts to minimize these evils but these have yielded little or no positive result. These precarious and unfortunate situations described above have permeated all strata of the Nigerian society thereby plunging ethnicities and hampering inter-ethnic relations. One of such crisis which has almost become recurrent is the herders and farmers crisis. Matgsumoto and Taeb (2008) assert that although Nigeria is a country rife with crises, dispute over land issues constitutes a significant number of these crisis events. This may be so because access to land according to Fabusoro, Matgsumoto and Taeb (2008) has been shown to be important to poverty reduction, economic growth and the empowerment of the poor. Although crises surrounding land issues in Nigeria are multi-faceted and complex, herders and farmers' represent the most significant focus of these crises (Blench, 2008). Similarly, Fasona and Omojola (2008) observed that a study of media reports of conflict issues in Nigeria from 1991 to 2008 showed that about 35% of conflicts reported on in Nigeria were between farmers and herdsmen.

Regrettably, and recently too, these friendly cohabitants have been thrown into occupational war which escalated between 2013 to 2018 with some vestiges to the present. No doubt, several and concerted efforts have been made by government at all levels, community and faith based organizations to end the feud as evident in the deployment of military and other security operatives to quell the crises as well as convocation of peace summits. However, these efforts have almost been less effective. In a crisis situation such as the farmers and herders clashes, information is key. Whereas television and radio stations have historically been used to spread information, there is a current surge in social media use among different people of the world (Kaplan, 2017), and as such the social media have become important tools of communication. According to Kaplan, (2017), the social media have become a key communication tool, through which individuals can instantly connect, exchange ideas and opinions on a variety of issues, and exercise their right to freedom of association in the virtual world. Social media platforms help groups overcome their collective action problem. They foster instant low-cost communication between group members, help individuals exchange resources, and spread awareness on a massive scale, larger than any communication method has

done before. This is not to say that revolutions and peaceful demonstrations have not been successful in the past, or that violent conflicts have not intensified as a result of political decisions alone; however, it is essential to take into account that the social media have become a vital factor in shaping the trajectory and lifespan of social and political movements (Kaplan, 2017). What this means is that the social media can easily be used to mobilize the citizenry in times of crises such as the herders and farmers crisis in Benue State.

### **Statement of the Problem**

There is a general consensus by communication scholars that the media play a vital role in conflict resolution and peace building, locally, nationally and globally. Nwosu (2004) observed that the mass media (social media inclusive) are considered to be very important in conflict management because they are information merchants, conduits or carriers of various shades and colours of information. In times of crises or even wars, adequate information is considered to be a critical factor in the emergence, escalation or reduction of tension at various levels. Tensions depending on how they are managed can determine the end or continuation of the crises. Several studies (Nwosu, 2004; Dodo, 2008; Fasona & Omojola, 2008 and Nasidi, 2019) have been conducted on how mass media campaigns can be used in crises management. However, most of the studies have concentrated on other media of communication such as radio, television, newspapers and magazines not much on the social media. Again, studies done in this area did not consider other variables such as the role of social media campaigns in the herders and farmers crises and interethnic relations. This study therefore, investigates social media campaigns on herders and farmers and interethnic relations in Benue State.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The general objective of this study is to assess social media campaigns on herders and farmers and interethnic relations in Benue State. Specifically, the study seeks to achieve the following objectives:

- i. To examine types of social media campaigns on the herders and farmers crises found on the social media;



- ii. To ascertain ways social media campaigns have shaped ethnic consciousness among the Benue public;
- iii. To determine how social media messages affect interethnic relations among Benue people;

### **Scope of the Study**

This study is undertaken to assess social media campaigns on herders and farmers and interethnic relations in Benue State. It follows that; this study was limited to only contents that have to do with herders and farmers crises and interethnic relations in Benue State. It was also limited to Makurdi metropolis. The study covered a period of three months.

### **Review of Concepts**

#### **Social Media**

Social media is the interaction among people in which they create, share or exchange information and ideas in virtual communities and networks. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) define social media as "a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0 and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content." Furthermore, social media depend on mobile and web-based technologies to create highly interactive platforms through which individuals and communities share, co-create, discuss, and modify user-generated content. They introduce substantial and pervasive changes to communication between organizations, communities, and individuals (Kietzmann and Hermkens, 2011). Agichtein, Donato, Gionis and Gilad (2008) posited that social media differ from traditional or industrial media in many ways, including quality, reach, frequency, usability, immediacy, and permanence. There are many effects that stem from internet usage. According to Nigel Graham and Hodges (2012), internet users continue to spend more time with social media sites than any other type of site. At the same time, the total time spent on social media in the U.S. across PC and mobile devices increased by 37 percent to 121 billion minutes in July 2012 compared to 88 billion minutes in July 2011 (Nielsen, 2012). For content contributors, the benefits of participating in social media have gone beyond simply social sharing to building reputation and bringing in

career opportunities and monetary income, as discussed in Tang, Gu, and Whinston (2012).

Social media are interactive forms of communication that use the Internet, including podcasts, RSS feeds, social networks, text messaging, blogs, wikis, virtual worlds and more in the dissemination of information to thousands upon thousands of users globally (Wasserman, 2007). Social media make it possible for anyone to create, modify, and share information content and share it with others, using relatively simple tools that are often free or inexpensive. According to Dare (2011), social media refers to on-demand access to information content anytime, anywhere, on any digital device, as well as interactive user feedback, creative participation. Another aspect of social media is the real-time generation of new, unregulated content. Most technologies described as "social media" are digital, often having characteristics of being manipulated, networkable, dense, compressible, and interactive (Lev, 2003). Some examples may be the Internet, websites, computer multimedia, video games, CD-ROMS, and DVDs. According to Lev (2003), social media do not include television programmes, feature films, magazines, books, or paper-based publications – unless they contain technologies that enable digital interactivity. Wikipedia, an online encyclopedia, is an example, combining Internet accessible digital text, images and video with web-links, creative participation of contributors, interactive feedback of users and formation of a participant community of editors and donors for the benefit of non-community readers.

Fairley (2012) concedes that social media is the collective of online communications channels dedicated to community-based input, interaction, content-sharing and collaboration. Websites and applications dedicated to forums, microblogging, social networking, social bookmarking, social curation, and wikis are among the different types of social media. Fairly (2012) lists examples of social media to include: Facebook, Twitter, Wikipedia, LinkedIn, Reddit and Pinterest. Fairley (2012) concludes that social media is becoming an integral part of life online as social websites and applications proliferate. Most traditional online media include social components, such as comment fields for users.





## Social Media Campaign

Social media campaign is a series of coordinated activities aimed at achieving a specific goal over a set period of time, with outcomes that can be tracked and measured. It can be limited to a single network, or take place across multiple social media platforms. A social media campaign is a coordinated marketing effort to reinforce or assist with a business goal using one or more social media platforms. Campaigns differ from everyday social media efforts because of their increased focus, targeting and measurability (Fairley, 2012). According to Chilwa (2011), a social media campaign should focus around a singular goal, whether it is on *Facebook* or *Instagram*. Common goals for social media campaigns include: getting feedback from users, building email marketing lists, increasing website traffic, improving overall engagement, directly driving sales. Chioma (2011) averred that goals must be discrete and measurable. According to Chioma (2011) before a campaign, a baseline measure of targeted metric should be obtained to track changes and performance throughout the campaign and beyond. Goals are shaped by the means, the message and the target audience. Different demographics also have varying preferences for social media platforms, so pick the platform suited to your target audience. In a similar vein, Chioma (2011) averred that before starting a campaign, have in place all of the tools for tracking metrics. There are several free social media marketing apps which track shares, retweets, likes and keywords associated with your goal. Once a baseline is established, define goals and schedule a definitive timeline for the campaign. Having firm start and end dates is important, both for a) keeping costs and mission creep in check, and comparing performance pre-and-post campaign.

Dhaha and Igale (2013) have provided some of the social media campaign best practices which include: Action-gate - ask users to interact with social media posts. Invite them to ask questions, take polls, provide reviews, enter contests and join mailing lists. Provide incentives - give them a reason to provide information about themselves. Offer prizes, discounts and exclusive content in exchange for their attention and information. Make prizes relevant to the business if using a contest. For a t-shirt company, it makes no sense to offer an Xbox as first prize in your contest (offer a year's worth of t-shirts). Proactively engage throughout

the campaign - answer and address critique quickly and reinforce positive interactions with personal attention. Promote across all social media accounts, even if the campaign is focused on one platform (e.g. Facebook). Adapt the look and messaging of your entire online presence to reinforce the campaign. Include campaign branding and language on headers, landing and home pages and carefully monitor performance and adjust strategy if needed. A social media campaign exhibits a broad penetration with over 71% of Internet users all around the world staying connected with the help of social networking websites (eMarketer, 2017). Moreover, 60% of the worldwide social network users can be reached just via *Facebook* (eMarketer, 2017). One special form of such social media campaigns that try to foster the impact of positive word-of-mouth are tryvertising campaigns. Tryvertising campaigns are an experience-based advertising approach where some product or idea testers are motivated and incentivized to share their positive product experiences online (Oberhofer, 2014). In this case, firms or organizations have recognized that first-hand experiences from consumers that already tried the (new) product or idea have been shown to have a higher impact on potential consumers than information stemming from the firm (Willemssen, 2011). Taken together, these advantages are beneficial for a successful campaign launch.

### **Ethnic Relations**

Ethnic relations is the study of social, political, and economic relations between races and ethnicities at all levels of society. This area encompasses the study of systemic racism, like residential segregation and other complex social processes between different racial and ethnic groups (Bailey, 2013). According to Bohmer (1998), the sociological analysis of race and ethnicity frequently interacts with postcolonial theory and other areas of sociology such as stratification and social psychology. At the level of political policy, an ethnic relations is discussed in terms of either assimilationism or multiculturalism. Anti-racism forms another style of policy, particularly popular in the 1960s and 1970s. At the level of academic inquiry, ethnic relations is discussed either by the experiences of individual racial-ethnic groups or else by overarching theoretical issues. One of the most important social psychological findings concerning race relations is that members of





stereotyped groups internalize those stereotypes and thus suffer a wide range of harmful consequences. For example, in a phenomenon called stereotype threat, members of racial and ethnic groups that are stereotyped as scoring poorly on tests will perform poorer on those tests if they are reminded of this stereotype (Pager, 2003). The effect is so strong that even simply asking the test-taker to state her or his race before taking the test (such as by bubbling in "African American" on a multiple choice question) will significantly alter test performance (Gaddis, 2015). A specifically sociological contribution to this line of research has found that such negative stereotypes can be created on the spot: an experiment by Lovaglia (1998) demonstrated that left-handed people can be made to suffer stereotype threat if they are led to believe that they are a disadvantaged group for a particular kind of test (Gaddis, 2015). Another important line of research on race takes the form of audit studies. The audit study approach creates an artificial pool of people among whom there are no average differences by race. According to Fong (2001), human society has been profoundly shaped by the political geography of ethnic relations. While the term 'ethnicity' originates from ancient Greece, its political and spatial manifestations are central to the conflict and mass violence during the last two centuries. The evolution of ethnicity as a pervasive social marker and mobilizer of collective action cannot be fathomed without accounting for its intertwined spatial, material, and political dimensions. Contemporary forms of ethnicity have been shaped by three key political geographic dynamics – European colonialism, the rise of the nation-state, and recent waves of urbanization and globalization.

### **Herders**

Herders are people who engage in cattle rearing. In Nigeria, cattle rearing is dominated by the Fulani tribe. A significant number of them are nomadic in nature, herding cattle, goats and sheep across the vast dry grass lands of their environment, making them the world's largest pastoral nomadic group. They are massively spread over many countries, and are found mainly in West Africa and northern parts of Central Africa, but also in Sudan and Egypt. The main Fulani sub-groups in Nigeria are: Fulbe Adamawa, Fulbe Mbororo, Fulbe Sokoto, Fulbe Gombe, and the Fulbe Borgu (Eyekpimi, 2016). There is diverse

speculation about the origin of the Fulani herdsmen. In the accent Arabic writing, Fulani people were mentioned too. Anthropologist says that the origin of Fulani is connected with Egypt. Some hypothesis states that Fulani is one of the Israel tribes. Others experts believe that Fulani originated from the region of present Northern Senegal. Capturing vast territories, Fube managed to create powerful states that even Europeans tried not to touch them for many centuries. Fulani proverbs say: "Cattle surpass everything, it's even more important than father and mother" "if cattle die, then fulbe dies". The herdsmen have often come into conflict with local farmers. The clashes also continued in the last several years. Recently the nature of the attacks has changed. It is often contained in news reports that Fulani Herdsman now allegedly uses firearms to kill farmers both in their farms and homes (Soriola, 2018).

### **Farmers**

A farmer (also called an agriculturer) is a person engaged in agriculture, raising living organisms for food or raw materials. The term usually applies to people who do some combination of raising field crops, orchards, vineyards, poultry, or other livestock. A farmer might own the farmed land or might work as a laborer on land owned by others, but in advanced economies, a farmer is usually a farm owner, while employees of the farm are known as farm workers, or farmhands. However, in the not so distant past, a farmer was a person who promotes or improves the growth of (a plant, crop, etc.) by labor and attention, land or crops or raises animals (as livestock or fish). More distinct terms are commonly used to denote farmers who raise specific domesticated animals. For example, those who raise grazing livestock, such as cattle, sheep, goats, and horses, are known as ranchers (U.S.), graziers (Australia & U.K.), or simply stockmen. Sheep, goat, and cattle farmers might also be referred to respectively as shepherds, goatherds, and cowherds. According to Kumaraveloo and Lunner (2018), the term dairy farmer is applied to those engaged primarily in milk production, whether from cattle, goats, sheep, or other milk producing animals. A poultry farmer is one who concentrates on raising chickens, turkeys, ducks, or geese, for either meat, egg, or feather production, or commonly, all three. A person who raises a variety of vegetables for market may be called a truck farmer or market



gardener. Dirt farmer is an American colloquial term for a practical farmer, or one who farms his own land.

In developed nations, a farmer (as a profession) is usually defined as someone with an ownership interest in crops or livestock, and who provides land or management in their production. Those who provide only labor are most often called farmhands. Alternatively, growers who manage farmland for an absentee landowner, sharing the harvest (or its profits) are known as sharecroppers or share farmers (Kumaraveloo and Lunner, 2018). In the context of agribusiness, a farmer is defined broadly, and thus many individuals not necessarily engaged in full-time farming can nonetheless legally qualify under agricultural policy for various subsidies, incentives, and tax deductions. In the context of developing nations or other pre-industrial cultures, most farmers practice a meager subsistence agriculture; a simple organic-farming system employing crop rotation, seed saving, slash and burn, or other techniques to maximize efficiency while meeting the needs of the household or community. One subsisting in this way may become labelled as a peasant, often associated disparagingly with a "peasant mentality" (Kumaraveloo & Lunner, 2018). In developed nations, however, a person using such techniques on small patches of land might be called a gardener and be considered a hobbyist. Alternatively, one might be driven into such practices by poverty or, ironically—against the background of large-scale agribusiness—might become an organic farmer growing for discerning/faddish consumers in the local food market (Kumaraveloo and Lunner, 2018). According to Dyer (2007), The word 'farmer' was originally used to describe a tenant paying a leasehold rent (a farm), often for holding a lord's manorial demesne. The use of the word was eventually extended to mean any tenant or owner of a large holding, though when Gregory King estimated that there were 150,000 farmers in the late seventeenth century he evidently defined them by their tenures, as freeholders were counted separately.

### **Ethnic Relations between Farmers and Herders**

The relationship between farmers has never been cordial. There is often rivalry between farmers and herders which often results into clashes. Farmers and herdsmen clashes are feuds that have led to wanton

destruction of lives and properties over the years largely across Africa and Nigeria in particular. Violent conflicts between herdsman from northern Nigeria and farmers in the central and southern zones have escalated in recent years and are spreading southward, threatening the country's security, stability and peace. With an estimated death toll of approximately 2,500 people in 2016, these clashes are becoming as potentially dangerous as the Boko Haram insurgency in the North East. Yet to date, response to the crisis at both the federal and state levels have been poor (International Crises Group, 2017). Nigeria has experienced a considerable increase in natural resource conflicts since the early 1990s. The increasing conflicts between farmers and herdsman have recently become a cause for worry, especially in wetland areas of the middle belt, North Central Nigeria (Leme, 2017). In a particular attack by fulani herdsman in 2016 on Nimbo residents in Uzo- Uwani Local Government Area of Enugu State, left about 40 persons dead (Abiodun, 2016). These conflicts between herdsman and farmers have exacted a heavy humanitarian toll with thousands killed and tens of thousands displaced. In Benue, one of the hardest-hit states, Governor Samuel Ortom reports more than 1,878 people were killed between 2014 and 2016. Tens of thousands also have been displaced. From January 2015 to February 2017, at least 62,000 people were displaced in Kaduna, Benue and Plateau states; in the absence of Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps, most seek shelter in other poor, rural communities, straining their already scarce resources. For women and girls, the impact is frequently magnified. The relatives of men killed in the violence often evict widows from their farmland. Moreover, post-conflict economic and social disenfranchisement renders women and girls even more vulnerable to sexual and economic predation (International Crises Group, 2017).

Farmers and herdsman conflict have remained the most preponderant resource-use conflict in Nigeria (Ajuwon, 2004; Fasona and Omojola, 2005). The necessity to provide food of crop and animal origin, as well as raw materials for industry and export in order to meet ever-growing demands, has led to intensification of land use (Nyong and Fiki, 2005). The competition between farmers and herdsman, however, has often times turned into serious hostilities and social friction in many parts of Nigeria. The conflicts have demonstrated high potential to



exacerbate the insecurity and food crisis particularly in rural communities where most of the conflicts are localized, with reverberating consequences nationwide (Adisa, 2012). Based on the foregoing this study is geared towards appraising the impact of the anti-open grazing law in ending armed herdsmen attacks in Benue State.

### **Causes of Farmer and Herdsmen Conflict in Nigeria**

Problem does not exist in a vacuum and every problem was caused by something. A good number of factors gave rise to farmers and herdsmen conflict in Nigeria. This section is geared towards discussing them.

**Land use:** Intensive crop farming has expanded into grazing lands in many areas over these years. These areas of encroachment agree with most of the conflict points recorded (Muhammed, Ismailia, Bibi, 2015). They argued that the incessant clashes between farmers and herdsmen were partly caused by increase in population which led to utilization of grazing pathways for agricultural activities and residential purposes. This made land very scarce for herdsmen and most often they graze on farmers' crop which leads to clashes. Past conflicts were solely due to overlap of farmlands with cattle routes, where farmers grow crops on the routes (Muhammed, Ismailia, Bibi, 2015). Other studies show farmers encroachment on cattle routes is the real cause (Nformi, Mary-Juliet, Engwali and Nji (2014). Farmer-pastoralist conflicts have been associated with the conflict of land resource use exacerbated by dwindling resources (Blench, 2004). Some researchers have linked this crisis to the theory of eco-violence (Okoli & Atelhe, 2014), where environmental factors and exploitation of scarce resources leads to conflict and violence. This may explain the dwindling grazing resources (land, pasture etc.) and poor management of existing grazing reserves (Adisa, 2012) as one the major cause. Furthermore, the population is dynamic and ever increasing compared to land that is relatively static. The population growth rate of Nigeria per year is 3.2% (National Population Commission, 2012). Therefore, more and more people will continue to compete over land.

**Ethnic and Religious differences:** Recently, this conflict has escalated, taking another dimension of ethnic and Religious differences with little effort from government or community leaders aimed at addressing them (Muhammed, Ismailia, Bibi, 2015). Ethnic jingoists and politicians have

been benefitting in these strives and without doubt have succeeded in creating a divide between the farmers and pastoralist, especially in communities that are less educated. Leaders at the Federal, State, Local Governments and even at community levels become perplexed and wondered on how these issues can be resolved (Muhammed, Ismailia, Bibi, 2015).

In a survey research conducted by Yobe State, Nigeria, Bello (2013) examined "Herdsman and farmers conflict in North-Eastern Nigeria; Causes, Repercussion and Resolutions. The sample size consisted of 500 farmers and 250 cattle herdsman, making a total of 750. The study used quantitative methods with structured questionnaire as the major instrument for data collection. The result of the study revealed the following causes of farmers and herdsman conflict in Yobe state Nigeria; (a) Destruction of crops by cattle and other property (reservoirs, irrigational facilities and infrastructure) by the herdsman themselves are the main direct causes for conflicts cited by the farmers. (b) Burning of rangelands, FADAMA and blockage of stock routes and water points by crop encroachment are important direct reasons cited by the herdsman. (c) Increasing rate of cattle theft which, is often accompanied by violence. (d) Antagonistic perceptions and beliefs among farmers and herdsman could compound conflict situation, especially due to failing institutions and fierce competition for resources.

In support of above claim, Ingawa, Ega, and Erhabor (1999) reported that the key underlying causes of farmer-herdsman conflict in Nigeria are: 1. Decline in internal discipline and social cohesion, as the adherence to the traditional rules regarding grazing periods, and the authority of the traditional rulers is breaking down. This is exacerbated by increased rent seeking of the formal and traditional authorities in managing resource access. 2. Particularly severe on the traditional trek routes, which become favourite cropping sites because of their better soil fertility resulting from the concentration of animal manure from the trekking herds in these areas? Within the FADAMA areas, this is exacerbated by the fragmented nature of the crop plots, which makes prevention of animals straying in the crop plots difficult 3. Inadequacy of grazing resources, as increasing crop cultivation (and increasing commercialization of the crop-residues) and poor management of the existing grazing reserves have resulted in a significant reduction in available livestock feed resources, in





particular in the Northern States. 4. Moreover the high value crops introduced by NFDP (tomatoes and onions) produce almost no crop-residues for livestock feeding. 5. Finally, the regulation that twenty percent of the FADAMA would need to be set aside for grazing (National Agricultural Policy, 1988) has not been adhered to.

### **Using the Social Media to Promote Inter-ethnic Relations between Farmers and Herders**

While cultures around the world value their individual traditions, beliefs, and norms that make them unique, social media links people around the world regardless of differences and geographical boundaries. According to Chen and Zhang (2010), "The compression of time and space, due to the convergence of new media and globalization, has shrunk the world into a much smaller interactive field." People across the globe can interact with each other within seconds of sending and receiving messages. New social media has brought people from different cultures together in the "global village." During intercultural adaptation, people use social media to learn about their host countries, establish and maintain relationships, and stay informed with events in their home countries. Communication and interaction are key factors that influence how social media impacts intercultural adaptation.

New social media is an important part of our lives because it promotes the interconnectedness and interdependence of our culturally diverse world. Media for social interaction allows for people to communicate and engage with information that is quickly accessible on the Internet. In today's society, there is an increasing number of Internet users so new social media has become more popular in daily patterns and routines. The communication that occurs in these online contexts promotes interactive dialogues that build understanding of different points of view. "New social media means that everyone is a publisher and everyone is a critic" (Georgetown University, 2010). In social media, people have the opportunity to express their opinions to the public and participate in conversations and dialogue through a common virtual medium.

People use social media for many reasons. First, the need for connection and interaction with other people is evident. As supported by Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, people desire to fulfill a sense of

belonging through support from relationships with others. After obtaining physiological and safety needs, people strive to achieve Maslow's third need of belonging. New social media provide this opportunity where people can communicate with others and belong to different networks via virtual communities on the Internet. In relation to interacting with others online, people use social media to gain knowledge and learn about different opinions and perspectives of issues, topics, and events. Most importantly, new social media is used for socializing; it is a form of media that allows people to participate in conversations and online dialogue without being face-to-face with others.

Cultural differences influence communication, behavior, and values. "There are differences in the way that people who identify with different cultures, based on both national identity and gender, manage their communicative behaviors within SNSs (social network sites)" (Rosen et. al, 2010). These differences can be understood through Hofstede's five dimensions and the Diffusion of Innovation Theory. Hofstede's cultural dimensions are power distance, individualism/collectivism, masculinity/femininity, uncertainty avoidance, and long-term/short-term orientation. Power distance is the extent to which the less powerful members of organizations and institutions accept and expect that power is distributed unequally. Individualism and collectivism refer to the degree to which individuals are integrated into groups. Masculinity and femininity describe the distribution of roles between the genders; for example, assertive and competitive vs. caring and nurturing. Uncertainty avoidance deals with a society's tolerance for uncertainty and ambiguity, and long-term and short-term orientation illustrate the focus and values of a culture (Itim, 2009).

In relation to new social media, differences in individualistic and collectivistic cultures are apparent in users' communication and behavioral styles. Rosen et. al (2010) describe how people from individualistic cultures focus on meeting new people and being seen by many people, rather than maintaining their already existing relationships. On the other hand, people from collectivistic cultures utilize social network sites to "maintain close relationships with a small number of ties instead of creating new connections with people" (Rosen et. al, 2010).



## Theoretical Framework

### Frustration-Aggression Theory

This study employed frustration-aggression theory as espoused by John Dollard in (1939) and expanded by Miller (1941) cited in Faleti (2015) to explain farmers-herdsmen clashes. This theory contends that the reason for the display of aggression by people is the feeling of not being able to completely get what they actually deserve. In other words, when what people get is lower than their expectations, they result to conflict. Faleti (2015) remarks that the difference between “expected need” and “actual need” that propelled some conflicts. He further posits that where expectation does not meet attainment, there is a high likelihood for the aggrieved party to confront anybody they feel is responsible for their inability to attain their desires. Frustration-aggression theory conceives conflict as the outcome of frustration of an individual or group from being unable to attain their legitimate desire. This theory has some major propositions which when explored are capable of explaining farmers-herdsmen conflicts in Nigeria. The first as espoused by Dollard et.al. (1939) posits that “the occurrence of aggressive behaviour always presupposes the existence of frustration and, that the existence of frustration always leads to some form of aggression”. This explanation of aggression as the only consequence of frustration was criticized. As a result of this criticism, Miller (1941) rephrased the second part of the theory which states that “frustration produces instigations to a number of different types of responses”. Miller’s intervention posits or entails that, there are several repercussions of frustration, one of which is aggression, unlike the original version, which posited just one outcome of frustration, which is aggression. However, Miller’s reformulation sticks to the position that all aggressions are caused by frustration.

From another angle, the theory posits that frustration could be additive or accumulative. That is, minor frustration could lead to greater aggression than expected. They argue that, it is as a result of the accumulation or addition of the present, with the previous residual frustration, that the aggression became high. The argument asserts that not all frustrations lead to overt aggression. This means that there are some frustrations whose reactions are not immediate but are postponed to the instigation of a further frustration. These theorists also assert that the presence of some inhibitions to the overt demonstration of aggression

in the form of repercussive punishment to a loved one is the course of demonstrating such aggression. When such punishment is greater than the goal they initially aspired, they tend to vent their aggression in a milder way by demonstrating overt anger or redirecting their aggression.

This takes us to their next major postulation which states that “a particular frustration instigates aggression primarily against the source of frustration but also instigates aggression against targets that are, to some degree, related to that source”. It means that the targets of aggression are not always the sources of the frustration (Akorede, 2018). Aggressions are sometimes redirected at people or things that are related to the major target, where such targets cannot be reached. This theory can be captured in the behaviours of belligerent parties involved in the conflict of farmers and herdsman. Sometimes, a party suddenly launch assault on the other without any harm previously done by them. Such action could be situated within the delay or transfer of aggression theory. It could be reprisals of a frustration meted on them by those they feel are connected with the present group they are attacking.

Frustration-aggression theory explains the farmers-herdsman conflict in the sense that, they both feel they are legitimately entitled to pasture land and water due to the nature of their occupation. The farmers feel that, by virtue of being the indigenous owners of the land, there should be no further reduction on the limited available land which is not commensurately owned with their given demographic explosion. They feel that Fulani's encroachment on their land is a hindrance to attaining their full farming potential, since they have large families that cultivate large expanse of land. The Fulani on the other hand feel that the farmers are problems to them in accessing pasture land and water, thereby mal-nourishing their cattle and reducing their market value by making them less attractive. The Fulani's major preoccupation is to have a large herd of cattle, and any hindrance to achieving such a goal is confronted with very strong aggression and attack. Frustration usually builds from lack of communication; the social media which have enhanced the exchange of messages from one group to another are therefore better placed to solve this issue, thus, the relevance of this theory to the study.

### **Research Method**

To carry out this research study successfully, the survey method was used, while the questionnaire was used as instrument of data



collection. The rationale for the use of survey method is to elicit responses from the sampled respondents. Survey is the most appropriate method for this study because the issue under study seeks to assess social media campaigns on herders and farmers crises and interethnic relations in Benue State. Besides as Frey, Carl, Botan and Kreps (1991:179), note "survey research is particularly useful for gathering descriptive information about populations too large for every member to be studied."

The population of this study is drawn from the entire population of the people in Makurdi metropolis which is 407,000 (NPC, 2020 available on <https://www.macrotrends.net/cities/23539/makurdi/population>). The population consists of only adult male and female resident in Benue State at the time of this research.

The sample size for this study is three hundred and eighty four (384). The sample population was statistically determined using Keyton's (2001) sample determination formula which gives a 95% confidence level and 5% sampling error for each sample deduced from the predetermined population range. The table below shows how the sample was drawn:

**Figure 3.1: Sample size for different population at 95% confidence level and 5% sampling error**

Population	Sample size	Population	Sample size
50	44	260	155
75	63	280	162
100	80	300	169
120	92	400	196
130	97	500	217
140	103	1000	278

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150	108	1500	306
160	113	2000	322
170	116	3000	341
180	128	4000	351
190	127	5000	357
200	140	10,000	
381			
240	143	100,000 & above	384

**Source: Keyton, 2001**

Therefore the sample size for this study is 384. This number falls within the range of one hundred thousand (100,000) and above of Keyton's sample determination formula. The sample size of three hundred and eighty four (384) is therefore adopted as the sample size for this study.

To draw a sample size from the study population, multi-stage sampling procedure, involving a combination of cluster, purposive and simple random sampling techniques were used to provide a relatively equal opportunity for the respondents.

The researcher first used cluster sampling technique to divide the population into twelve (12) units of clusters based on the major settlements in Makurdi metropolis. Cluster sampling according to Yates, David and Daren (2008) is a sampling technique where the entire population is divided into groups, or clusters and a random sample of these clusters are selected. The clusters selected were: High-Level; North Bank; Akpehe; New G.R.A; Old G.R.A; Gboko Road; Kanshio; Wadata; Ankpa Ward; Modern Market; Wurukum; and Nyiman.

Having selected twelve (12) units based on the major settlements, the researcher used simple random technique to pick two (2) streets from the twelve (12) major settlements. Simple random sample technique according to Yates, David and Daren (2008) is a subset of individuals (a sample) chosen from a larger set (a population). Each individual is chosen randomly and entirely by chance, such that each individual has the same probability of being chosen at any stage during the sampling process.

To achieve this random selection therefore, the researcher wrote the names of all the streets in each of the major settlements on separate pieces of papers and labeled them according to their settlements and drop





them separately in twelve (12) jars, blindfold a research assistant who will pick two pieces of paper each randomly from the twelve (12) jars. Thus, twenty four streets will be picked, two (2) each from the twelve settlements. The streets picked are: Ernyi and Yogbo streets from North Bank, Inikpi and Iorkyaa Ako streets from High-Level, Terwase Agbadu and Akange streets from Gboko Road, Doo and Laha streets from Nyiman, Court Road and Mzambe Street in Akpehe, Aernyi and Atume streets in New G.R.A, Bakut and Gebi streets in Old G.R.A, Adikpo and Kuna streets in Wadata, Imande and Torkwase streets in Kanshio, Benue Crescent and Moji streets in Ankpa Ward, Onitsha and Awe streets in Wurukum, and Dogo and Ladi streets in Modern Market. This brings the total number of streets selected to twenty four (24).

After that, the researcher used purposive sampling technique to pick four (4) compounds on each of the streets, two compounds on the right and two compounds on the left after an interval of seven (7) houses for the study. This brings the total number of compounds to be selected to ninety six (96). According to Babbie (2001) a purposive sample, also commonly called a judgmental sample, is one that is selected based on the knowledge of a population and the purpose of the study. The subjects are selected because of some characteristics.

Using purposive sampling technique again, the researcher selected four (4) respondents from each compound selected. The above translated to a total of 384 respondents which the researcher used as a representation of the entire population of the study area.

A total of three hundred and eighty four (384) copies of the questionnaire were administered through one on one contact with respondents in the areas successfully. And two days after administration, the questionnaire were collected, collated and analyzed.

The method for data analysis used for this study was the simple percentage method, which analyses and interprets the results presented in tabular form. The analysis was based on the responses to the questions in the questionnaire.

### **Data Presentation**

A total of 340 respondents from a sample size of 384, representing a high response rate of 89% were successfully studied while forty four (44) copies, representing 11% were returned uncompleted and thus found unusable. Below is the presentation of the data in tables.

**Table 1: Types of Social Media Campaigns on Herders and Farmers Crises**

Response Percentage	Frequency	
Ban on open grazing	78	
23 Campaign against herders occupation	68	
20 Campaign against beef consumption	45	13
69 Campaign against insecurity	20	
Linking crisis in ethno-religious dimension	80	
24 Total	340	100

**Source: Field Survey, 2021.**

Data in Table 1 sought to know that types of social media campaigns on herders and farmers crisis. In the Table ban on open grazing, campaign against herders' occupation, campaign against beef consumption, campaign against insecurity and linking crisis in ethno-religious dimensions were identified as the types of social media campaigns on herders and farmers crisis by the respondents.

**Table 2: Ways Social Media Campaigns have Shaped Ethnic Consciousness among the Benue Public**

Response Percentage	Frequency
Fulani herders are foreigners and invaders	98
29	



Herders are historical enemies to crop farmers	88	
26		
Herders have an Islamic agenda	65	19
Herders are protected by the central government	89	
26		
Total	340	100

**Source: Field Survey, 2021.**

Data in Table 2 sought to know ways social media campaigns have shaped ethnic consciousness among the Benue public. In the Table Fulani herders are foreigners and invaders, herders are historical enemies to crop farmers, herders have an Islamic agenda and herders are protected by the central government were the ways the social media have shaped ethno consciousness among the Benue public.

**Table 3: Ways Social Media Messages Affect Interethnic Relations among Benue People**

Response Percentage	Frequency	
Social media messages on herders' attacks have enhanced my ethnic identity	68	
20		
I have become weary of Fulani herders	72	
21		
It is very difficult to trust herders	110	
32		
Herders are violent occupiers	90	26
Total	340	100

**Source: Field Survey, 2021.**

Data in Table 3 sought to know social media messages affect interethnic relations among Benue people. In the Table, social media

messages on herders' attacks have enhanced respondents' ethnic identity, respondents said they have become weary of Fulani herders, it was very difficult to trust herders, and herders are violent occupiers were they ways social media messages have affected interethnic relations among Benue people.

### Discussion of Findings

Findings show that the types of social media campaigns on the herders and farmers crises that are found on the social media are ban on open grazing, campaign against herders' occupation, campaign against beef consumption, campaign against insecurity, and linking crisis in ethno-religious dimension. This is attested by (23%) of the respondents who agreed with ban on open grazing, (20%) of the respondents who agreed with campaign against herders occupation, (13%) of the respondents who agreed with campaign against beef consumption, (20%) of the respondents who agreed with campaign against insecurity, and (24%) of the respondents who agreed linking crisis in ethno-religious dimension. These findings support Chilwa's (2011) study which recommended that a social media campaign should focus around a singular goal, whether it is on *Facebook* or *Instagram*. Common goals for social media campaigns include: getting feedback from users, building email marketing lists, increasing website traffic, improving overall engagement, directly driving sales. Chioma (2011) study also averred that goals must be discrete and measurable. According to Chioma (2011) before a campaign, a baseline measure of targeted metric should be obtained to track changes and performance throughout the campaign and beyond. Goals are shaped by the means, the message and the target audience. Different demographics also have varying preferences for social media platforms, so pick the platform suited to your target audience.

Findings show that the social media campaigns have shaped ethnic consciousness among the Benue public by recognizing that Fulani herders are foreigners and invaders, that herders are historical enemies to crop farmers, that herders have an Islamic agenda, and that herders are protected by the central government. This is affirmed by (29%) of the respondents who agreed that Fulani herders are foreigners and invaders, (26%) of the respondents who agreed that herders are historical enemies to crop farmers, (19%) of the respondents who agreed that herders have an Islamic agenda, and (26%) of the respondents who agreed that herders



are protected by the central government. These findings are further supported by Ajuwon (2004); Fasona and Omojola, (2005) studies which found that farmers and herdsman conflict have remained the most preponderant resource-use conflict in Nigeria.

Findings show that the social media messages have affected inter-ethnic relations among Benue people as the social media messages on herders' attacks have enhanced ethnic identity among Benue people, become weary of Fulani herders, did not trust herders and believed that herders are violent occupiers. This supported by (20%) of the respondents who agreed that social media messages on herders' attacks have enhanced their ethnic identity, (21%) of the respondents who agreed that they have become weary of Fulani herders, (32%) of the respondents who agreed that it is very difficult to trust herders, and (26%) of the respondents who agreed that herders are violent occupiers. This is further supported by Rosen et. al, (2010) study which averred that cultural differences influence communication, behaviour, and values. There are differences in the way that people who identify with different cultures, based on both national identity and gender, manage their communicative behaviours within SNSs (social network sites).

### **Conclusion**

Following the findings available to the study through the analysis and interpretation of the research data, the study concluded that the social media campaigns have shaped ethnic consciousness among the Benue public by recognizing that Fulani herders are foreigners and invaders, that herders are historical enemies to crop farmers, that herders have an Islamic agenda, and that herders are protected by the central government and this has affected inter-ethnic relations among Benue people as the social media messages on herders' attacks have enhanced ethnic identity among Benue people, making people become weary of Fulani herders, did not trust herders and believed that herders are violent occupiers.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings from this study and findings of other empirical studies reviewed in this study, the research makes the following recommendations:

- i. There is need for viable NGOs on farmer-herdsman crises management, especially in the areas of awareness, education,

- prevention, and amelioration using social media campaigns. Furthermore, nongovernmental organizations should support livestock-centered livelihoods including cattle herding, not only in crises mitigation but also in the support of grassroots innovations and in influencing favorable national policies.
- ii. The atmosphere between farming and pastoral communities is extremely bitter and negative. Support should be provided for creative social media campaigns, radio and television to create new narratives showing how the interaction between the two groups could be peaceful and mutually beneficial. Above all, the National Orientation Agency (NOA), as an institution with presence across the 774 Local Government Areas (LGAs) of the country, should provide these critical services.
  - iii. Efforts should be made towards using the social media in modeling best practices of pastoral-farmer relations as evident in countries such as Chad, Ethiopia and Niger, where the existence of institutionalized and functional mechanisms for pre-empting and resolving conflicts between farmers and pastoralists enable them to live in peace.

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