

TecHedonism as metaverse in the future of Nigerian netizens' sociopolitics

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Abstract

The hedonistic claim that the ultimate human motivation is the quest for pleasure and the avoidance of pain has been fundamental to philosophical discourses on human actions through different epochs. This reflects the fact that both pleasure and pain are central to existential realities. However, the contrasting nature of these phenomena reflects the need for coping mechanisms to overcome pain in order to attain pleasure. Therefore, this study applies the analytical method of critical discourse to explore Nigerian netizenship by creating a historical narrative of sociopolitical engagements through the comedy genre of entertainment. The study thus traces the transitions through different technological evolutions in the entertainment industry while positing that the Metaverse is the future of the sociopolitics of Nigerian netizens as a safer option for digital activism and for engaging in socioeconomic interactions.

Keywords: Philosophical hedonism, TecHedonism, Metaverse.

1. Introduction

Hedonism remains one of the most enduring and controversial concepts in philosophy, dating back to the Platonic tradition of equating the moral good with the pleasurable, in terms of which every action (even when initially painful) is undertaken in order to achieve pleasure (see Goodell 1921). This led to the Aristotelian ethics of interdependence in his conceptualisation of well-being as determined by the attainment of happiness, the end goal of all pleasure.¹ Virtue is thus an integral part of the latter as cultivated by intellectual contemplation, where the other becomes an extension of the moderate moral persona in aspiring towards a happy end (Aristotle 1893). As such, whether from a social, psychological, utilitarian or physical perspective, the central focus of hedonism is on the good life, one in which the balance of enjoyment over suffering is the greatest, thereby advancing a post-sensual argument (Roger 2006). However, the hedonist argument depends on the intrinsic value of experience in which the intrinsically good is considered as that from which pleasure is derived, while that which is intrinsically bad is that which gives displeasure (Dietz 2021). Following on this, some scholars consider hedonism as inferring that a pleasurable life determines a good life, in other words, that human behaviour is largely determined by pleasure-seeking, in contrast to ascetism, which involves an embrace of austere measures for living a disciplined life away from pleasure (Ruut 2003).

Some critics have also conceptualised hedonism as a key driver of consumerism, resulting in an addiction to things from which pleasure is derived, and ultimately the destruction of

the environment due to excessive exploitation. There have been some discourses around how hedonic lifestyles could destroy social bonds, as self-aggrandisement is prioritised at the expense of a commune, even though such sensory pleasure has fleeting value. Hedonism is often criticized for destroying critical thinking, societal morals, work ethics and health, which are fallouts of the momentary satisfaction derived from fleeting pleasure. Eventually, the concept of hedonism becomes a paradox, resulting in unhappiness in old age when these destructive attributes become manifest. As Dietz (2021) puts it, the desire for pleasure thus constitutes an obstacle to accessing it. This negates the expectation of 'happiness as enjoying one's life' (Ruut 2003) and devalues the quest of making it an ultimate goal for living.

Roger (2006: 619-620) uses the theory of internalism and externalism to deconstruct the concept of enjoyment. In this approach, hedonism is portrayed as a theory of well-being in which the contexts of accomplishment and enjoyment are compared and contrasted across different philosophical traditions to ascertain their essential value in contributing to well-being. He argues that the desire for enjoyment could constitute an end by contributing to individual well-being in and of itself, and this retains the relevance of the hedonist discourse today. This line of thought maintains that enjoyment increases tolerance of stress, makes individuals more sociable, and that the positive energy it radiates enhances rather than hinders health. Others deconstruct the concept of hedonism along two broad lines. The first is political utilitarianism, which places value on the greatest good, or that which is pleasurable to the majority in the commune. This is considered more enduring than the second, which is egotistic hedonism described as an enlightened choice for individual material good.

As noted previously, these positive strands of philosophical hedonism date back to Plato's generalist view of pleasure. Plato conceptualises its ideal form as the peak of morality derived from the satisfaction of doing one's duty. In line with this reasoning, the pleasant must thus aspire to the good as guided by philosophic virtue (see Goodell 1921: 29; 39). Taquet et al (2016), however, adopted the hedonic flexibility hypothesis that contrasting mood-dependent choices are based on short- and long-term ambitions. According to their analysis of daily decision-making processes, humans opt for pleasure-seeking activities to lighten their sad moods in the short term, while expectations of long-term pleasure could make them endure certain unpleasant moments. This hedonism of convenience thus provides a fluidity, as the pleasurable becomes dependent on spatio-temporal determinants of value. For the purposes of this analysis, this flexibility suits the use of technology for hedonic ends, as it accommodates both long-term and short-term aspirations to pleasure. The Heideggerian dialectics of technology about the interplay of control and freedom critiqued the deterministic conception of technology through numeric figures as farcical. For him, technology is best considered as a process of unravelling through which humans come to understand themselves and the universe as Being (Heidegger, 1977). He supports a more liberal view of technology as an unveiling, which, rather than leading to the destructive end of human life, contains in itself the solution to the challenges of human existence.

In this context, the degenerative label of a technology-savvy generation resulting from its hedonic value may be far-fetched, considering the many merits that technology offers the world today. For instance, Oza (2015) explored the shifting literary culture among Generation Z and Alpha within the psychodynamics of a preference for technologically supported literature (e-books/ audiobooks) as against the conventional print culture. While the reasoning for this is partly due to the convenience of pleasure reading, preschoolers have been observed in recent times to be exposed to technology before becoming acquainted with printed literature (Gottschalk 2019). Biologically, technology has also been discovered to elicit pleasurable

feelings. This was observed in the reactions of the *nucleus accumbens* -- a part of the brain which serves as an interface between emotion and action, especially when positive emotive feedbacks are derived in the use of technology (see Gottschalk 2019; Kool and Agrawal 2016). In terms of literary culture, deriving pleasure from reading is projected to increase across different generations of usage with a greater detachment from the older print culture and the embrace of emerging e-literature, as technology becomes a predominant determinant of personal and societal values (see Gottschalk 2019: 20; Anton, Camarero and Rodriguez 2017). On the other side of the value coin, Tanenbaum et al (2013) discuss the hedonistic value of technology from the initial stages of its production. This has been enabled by the democratisation of the materials, means, and technical know-how of production, leading to more accessibility and freedom in the do-it-yourself (DIY) age. The pleasure that such tech-creatives derive from the blend of fun, curiosity and relaxation results from the context of their creativity in a production adventure world, in contrast with solution-driven inventions which allow for less *playfulness*. Perhaps, such creatives serve to validate the importance of Marc Abrahams's Ig (Ignoble) Nobel Prize awards, suited to a blend of pleasure and science by proving that pleasure can generate value for our existence in the universe.

Suffice it to state that deriving pleasure from technological devices in the Internet of Things (IoT) age has come under scrutiny, especially in terms of abuses such as child pornography, because of the ease of access to victims by the perpetrators (see Thakor 2021: 118). Social media companies and others digital platforms, including Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, have attempted to deploy facial recognition and other AI tools to track and flag abusive content, in curbing this criminal practice and illicit means of deriving pleasure. Thakor (2021: 126-7), however, further explores the hedonistic value of voyeurism while attempting to track the link between child pornography offenders and their victims. He proposes that there is the hedonistic value of surveillance technology derived from the recognition of perpetrators and victims, as it produces greater efficiency in criminal investigation and digital vigilantism. Technology thus provides a multimodal hedonistic value, which this study seeks to unpack in conceptualising the intersections of hedonism and technology as TechHedonism while situating it in the Nigerian context.

2. Nigerian netizenship and the sociopolitics of TechHedonism

Measures for containing the coronavirus during the Covid-19 pandemic included lockdowns, and severe restrictions on social gatherings and freedom of movement. This adversely affected the potential for revenue generation by businesses, as many economies went into recession. Nigeria lost an estimated 34.1 per cent of its GDP, amounting to about \$16 billion, as a result of the coronavirus (Andam 2020). Despite the downward turn in the global economy, the ICT sector was a major beneficiary of the lockdown measures, as people leveraged the ability to communicate, learn and self-entertain remotely. In Nigeria, internet music subscribers rose to about 154.3 million as of December 2020, with a ripple effect on the volume of digital song sales and online streaming (see ITA 2021). Global internet bandwidth reportedly rose by 35 per cent in 2020, with 80 per cent of traffic used for social media, gaming and videos. Big digital platforms in the US made a net income of about \$192.4 billion, with a 21.1 per cent revenue increase in 2020, while those in China earned about \$48 billion, amounting to about 98 per cent revenue increase, in the same year (see UNCTAD 2021: xv; 23).

The ICT sector is fast becoming the mainstay of the Nigerian economy, contributing almost 18 per cent of the country's GDP during the third quarter of 2022 (NBS 2021). Driven by technology, the Nigerian media and entertainment industry has become increasingly

relevant in its sociopolitical life as an emerging driver of its economy, especially with the need to diversify the oil-based mono-economy that has been subjected to pricing volatility (see Iyoboyi and Na-Allah 2014). The digitalisation of production in Nollywood started with the production of Video Compact Discs (VCDs) in the 1990s, and has since given it a competitive edge in the global entertainment industry with improved picture clarity and quality (Ebelebe 2017). With an annual growth rate of about 13.4 per cent, the industry has been projected by PwC to double its revenue to about \$15 billion by 2025 (see Ireneo 2021; Lawal 2021). The potential in the industry has also been recognized by Netflix with the investment of about \$8 billion in Nollywood, and has entered into publishing and streaming deals with several Nigerian movie producers to target more than 6.9 million pay TV subscribers (Ireneo 2021; ITA 2021).

Other internet-based distribution platforms that are expanding access to the Nigerian entertainment industry include YouTube, Amazon, Apple and Hulu, alongside indigenously owned platforms like Iroko TV, Ibaka TV, TV Nolly, Nollyland and Afrinolly (see Ebelebe 2017: 49). Exploring Nollywood's technological and cultural hybridity, Onuzulike (2009: 182, 185) postulates that the availability of different platforms allows for multiple cultures to air their independent or joint narratives, and that technology also drives the cultural connection between the continent and its diaspora (see also Iyoboyi and Na-Allah 2014: 262) with the availability of these narratives via video films, and in more recent times the online streaming platforms. The decentralisation of video production has also enhanced this connectivity, with the Tik Tok App² providing platforms for producing personal videos which could trend in a matter of seconds. Such accessibility has allowed for improved interactions among Nigerian netizens who use these platforms to build parasocial relationships for showcasing their personal lives to followers, at times to give a false sense of wealth – which has led to the coinage of the term 'audio money'. It has also become a propaganda medium with certain ethical redefinitions due to the misrepresentation of ill-gotten or pseudo-wealth to feed the hedonic desires of netizens. Such potential for misrepresentation aligns with Soukup's (2009) notion of derealization where technology aids the reversal of reality in virtual manoeuvres that often evade moral valuation. The social media space has thus become the new platform for realising certain social mythic conventions – a medium of placing technology at the service of communal memory as a way of representing and projecting shared experiences.

In advancing the discussion on the intersections between technology and entertainment in Nigeria, technology has facilitated an improvement in time management, quality and collaborative projects in the industry. However, it has also facilitated the infringement of copyright issues through piracy, which denies, or at the least, undermines the pleasure that creatives ought to derive from proper remuneration for their efforts (Maton 2018: 661). Nonetheless, the creation of digital cinema packages makes piracy more difficult, as it enables the encoding of digital files and sending them through restricted channels to the movie theatre (Ebelebe 2021). Similarly, Eberendu (2015:28) asserts that the misuse of technology, including its addictive use, has redirected the hedonistic turn of deriving pleasure from real life experiences to virtual content on various social media platforms. While she argues that this results in lower quality of knowledge production and professionalism due to uncensored interactions, technology has also brought out the prevalence of satirical culture among Nigerian Netizens who continue to explore the medium as a channel of escape from current sociopolitical challenges, as well as a platform for aspiring to a better future. The expressions of these are perceptible in different comedy skits that have become integral to technology-driven socialization processes among netizens in the country.

Political satire is a precolonial reality in Nigeria, with the presence of praise singers and court jesters in palaces as major actors in the performativity of the Yoruba Efe, Hausa Yan Kama and Wawan Sarki, Urhobo Otota, and the Igbo Njakiri traditions, among others (see Nwankwo 2015; Omoko 2019). It continued in the post-colony of military dictatorship, with Fela's prominent Yabbis Nights at the Africa Shrine epitomizing a national satirical experience through which he called out the excesses of government and certain cultural practices that he considered neocolonial aberrations (see Olorunyomi 2003). Suffice to state that Fela is integral to the infusion of Nigerian Pidgin as the lingua franca in the performing arts, often delivered in alteration with English (see Adetunji 2013:3) and other indigenous languages.³ Fela's adopted mode of call-response musical delivery also permeated his Yabbis nights with an active audience often dictating the topic for sociopolitical interventions through shared experiences. Post-Fela, the satirical tradition has been sustained with the emergence of several stand-up comedians, as this genre of the entertainment industry became institutionalized through the introduction of a 'Night of Thousand Laughs' by Opah Williams on 1 October 1995, in order to commemorate Independence Day. It is instructive that Williams birthed the idea in a hospital ward with the bid to create pleasure by instrumentalizing laughter as an anodyne for sociopolitical challenges. Stage names such as Ali Baba, AY, Basketmouth, Klint de Drunk, Teju Baby Face, Lasisi Elenu, Holly Mallam, Princess, Lepacious Bose and I Go Save among others have become household names associated with stand-up comedy in the country (see Ayakoroma 2013). Though comedy has often been associated with laughter, its satirical value lies in its didactic content, as jokes are told to make light of certain critical situations as subtle means of highlighting social political challenges in the country.

At present, the comedy space has been mediated by technology as evidenced in the development of short skits by popular online content creators who have continued to play important roles. Perhaps the most important recognition of this emerging genre of comedy is the introduction of the Best Online Social Content Creator category in the African Magic Viewers' Choice Awards. The accessibility of these contents has also been enhanced through the miniaturisation of consumer technologies, resulting in their availability on personal computers, smartphones, iPads and other Personal Digital Assistant devices (see Apeh 2016:168). Online video comedy skits thrive on the number of viewers to attract advert placements. This validates Soukup's (2009:23) proposition that the power of seeing is derived from the pleasure of seeing. The flexibility of production and the ability to repurpose user-generated contents as provided by technology (see Apeh 2016) with the incorporation of video editing tools have also created a level playing field for Nigerian creatives to build their way to stardom dependent on the receptibility of the audience. The growing number of notable skit makers within the Nigerian Netizen space include Mariam Adedoyin (Taaooma), Gloria Oloruntobi (Maraji), Ogechi Ukonu (Caramel Plug), Bukunmi Ilori (Kiekie), Samuel Perry (Broda Shaggi), Sydney Talker, Anita Asuoha (Real Warri piki), Chukwuemeka Amuzie (Brain Jotter), Abdulgafar Oluwatoyin (Cute Abiola), Nosa Afolabi (Lasisi Elenu), Kemi Ikuseedun (Mummy Wa) and Debo Adedayo (Mr Macaroni), to mention but a few. These comedians have leveraged social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube to ply their trade, with viewership of their contents often running into millions.

Ojomo and Sodeinde (2021:9), among other discourses on the trends of interactivity between audiences and online video skit makers, noted that the parasocial relationships developed over time are important for the evolution and development of mobilisation for sociopolitical activism in the future. In 2021, the Africa Polling Institute noted that these comedy skits were embraced in Nigeria to cope with issues of unemployment, depression and other mental health issues aside from their economic, educative and entertainment values (see Ihua 2021).

Perhaps a good representation of the connection between online comedy skit makers and their audiences is Mr Macaroni, who has continued to garner popular support for both his online contents and his physical activism. The 30-year-old comedian, who has also featured in several Nollywood movies, plays two distinct characters in his comedy; as Mr Macaroni (also known as Daddy wa), an eccentric promiscuous spendthrift elite politician who claims to be a father figure in the society with an endless mission of getting a suitable suitor for his daughter, and has alliances with rich and famous personalities. The second major character is that of Professor Hardlife, a two-sided Nigerian professor with a glorified past who makes life difficult for students and stays aloof from their peculiar experiences, even if at times he is compromised of self-acclaimed values. The satirical themes of Debo's skits range from money rituals, adultery, marriage to political corruption, police corruption, ASUU strike, fake pastors, loan sharks, fraudsters, voter apathy amongst the myriads of other social ills. However, what stands out about Mr Macaroni is his sociopolitical activism, especially for consistently speaking out against police corruption and the lack of social consciousness among the new generation of netizens who would rather share videos and pictures on social media that speak up in defence of victims of police brutality.

While Debo may have enjoyed sufficient followership for his online creativity, his legitimacy among fans became stronger with his participation in the landmark #EndSARS protests⁴ in Nigeria which took place in October 2020. Besides his presence at the site of the protests, he also had a well-publicized episode with the Nigerian police where he was assaulted alongside other protesters, and later joined other celebrities to commemorate the one-year anniversary. With the present political climate in the country derived from the build-up to the 2023 general elections, Mr Macaroni has become a leading voice for stimulating the consciousness of the citizenry towards effective political processes. The influence of Mr Macaroni is largely recognized, as with other online content producers, by betting platforms, real estate agents and other corporate organisations who leverage their platforms for the placement of their products for visibility. The expansion of his audience base has defined him as influential in setting the agenda for sociopolitical discourses, both in the context of digital activism and physical protests.

3. Emerging trends of TechHedonism in augmented reality

Augmented reality (AR) can be described as the use of technology to optically integrate virtual images with the real environment in order to facilitate real-time interactivity, involving active synchronized exchanges between users of AR-enabled communication interfaces (Javornik 2016: 9-10). While this term was coined in 1975 by two Boeing employees, Tom Caudell and David Mizell, its history can be traced back to the development of the Sensorama by Morton Heilig in 1962, having envisioned the need to integrate the five senses of members of the audience in maximizing pleasure at the cinema. This was followed by Ivan Sutherland's head-mounted display, Myron Krueger's Videoplace, and Louis Rosenberg's Virtual Fixtures (see Carmigniani et al 2011: 342-3; Mystakidis 2022: 489). The concept of interactivity is underscored by the power of control through virtuality, which infers the insertion of the virtual into physical reality. This experience entails the use of various devices and interfaces that could either be tangible (physical), collaborative (involving interactions between different display systems located in different spaces), hybrid (a combination of different interfaces), or multimodal (combining objects with natural features) (see Carmigniani et al 2011: 346). It has since been deployed to influence consumers, notably their cognitive, affective and behavioural responses (Javornik 2016: 24; Kool and Agrawal 2016).

Therefore, interrogating the hedonistic value of new technologies equipped with AR tools is vital to understanding techedonism today. For Filho and Dholakia (2013), an important starting point is to understand the technological convergence of devices, notably how multiple functionalities determine their hedonic value that influence their choice by users. Previously, Soukup (2009: 21-23) adopted the term 'techno-scopophilia' to describe a shift in how technology intersects with hitherto exclusive natural qualities such as pleasure and sexuality to produce romanticised filmic representations. This thrives especially in product placements for advertisements in audiovisuals, which have existed since the inception of the film industry. However, the focus on the commodity usually entails technology-aided hyperrealism that plays on the audience fantasy for desirability. The hedonic value of advertising is thus the conviction of end-users that the product will lead to their happiness. Javornik et al (2021) discusses this as brand hedonism through 'ephemeral elevation of reality' as deployed by luxury brands to give momentary sensory satisfaction to enhance intimacy between shoppers and advertised luxury brands. Beyond momentary satisfaction, Luo, Lam and Wang (2021) establish how hedonic attachments to entertainment destinations are significant for revisiting and repurchasing by tourists, where the experience of pleasurable moments determines choices of holiday sites and products.

The derivation of maximum pleasure from products have thus been driving innovations and inventions in terms of human interaction with technology. Technology has thus increasingly been deployed to bridge the spatio-temporal divide, with a shift from virtualisation to the augmentation of reality. As of January 2022, augmented reality (AR) has been estimated to have 3.5 billion users and a projected value of about \$198 billion by 2025 (Makarov 2022). The miniaturisation of AR means it is easily accessible as well as affordable, using mobile phones enabled with applications developed from toolsets such as Apple ARKIT and Android ARCORE. These tools are handy for blurring the spatiotemporal divide by deploying virtual reality through the use of 3D environmental metadata (Makarov 2022). In terms of their utilitarian values, they provide remote assistance delivered in real time through navigation tools in order to detect location of entities for their valuation. They have thus enhanced interactive experiences in various endeavours, including online shopping, health care-surgery/telemedicine, engineering, and mental health; 3D video call assistance; vehicle safety and ease of use, as well as military training with AR glasses and headsets, notably Microsoft HoloLens, Magic Leap and Google Glass; metaverse avatar experiences; the hybridization of telework and virtual meetings; and education through gaming/AR visualizations (Makarov 2022; Carmigniani et al 2011; Mystakidis 2022). The innovation of AR is to blur the spatial divide of visualisation by eliminating intermediate devices and personalising the experience. This is exemplified in the development of virtual retina displays and other devices aimed at assisting the physically challenged (Carmigniani et al 2011: 370).

Suffice it to say that the augmentation of reality to enhance the viewing experience enhances the initial attempt to make technology natural or organic, which could result in a bioethical dilemma of interference with natural elements within the human body (Soukup 2009: 29; Carmigniani et al 2011: 371). It follows from the blurring of the hitherto exclusivity of human and machine qualities by filmic representations of emotive machines to the insertion of miniaturised contact lenses and the use of touch-sensitive haptic suits⁵ to provide hedonic experience during viewership (see Mystakidis 2022:488). The techedonical logic is of the same pulsating experience with the placement of pace to overpower rationality while playing on the fetishisation of objects, which prioritises a maximisation of pleasure (Soukup 2009: 24).

4. Conclusion: Metaverse as the future of Nigerian netizens' sociopolitics

In its 2017 report *The Nigeria Gaming Industry*, PwC posited that increases in internet penetration would be proportional to the growth of subscribers and the number of gaming users as facilitated by telecommunications and e-payment companies. Furthermore, it projected that virtual fantasy sports betting platforms would be safer and more attractive to the youth population due its computerised nature that elongates betting activities from real life sports events to virtual fantasy football leagues. The technological consolidation of the IoT age populated by members of Generation Z and Generation Alpha indicates that the future of Nigerian netizens' sociopolitics is tied to AR. Already, online content creators are not only restricted to comedians displaying their creativity to provide hedonic value, but also animators who deploy fictive characters in viral contents to address the sociopolitical reality of netizens. Mirroring the convention of the previously mentioned stand-up comedy genre, a major animated character is Akpors, a truant street-smart kid extracted from Nigeria's South South and well versed in Nigerian pidgin, who navigates his existence amidst challenges within his immediate family and community. Akpors has since extended its reach of representation beyond the South South as an adopted avatar⁶ for individuals who mirror themselves with a lens of street smartness.

Given the discourse around the realization of the Metaverse,⁷ the shift towards a post-reality social arrangement is instructive for sociopolitical engagements of the future. The vision has garnered legitimacy over the years with the volume of trade transactions on the virtual platform put at \$54 billion annually, and messaging activities put at \$60 billion on a daily basis (see Moy and Gadgil 2022). As a platform that facilitates multisensory interactions between digital objects and people in immersive virtual environments across education, business, entertainment and work engagements, the drift towards mixed reality⁸ as an advancement of augmented reality (see Mystakidis 2022: 486) foreshadows more integrative approaches of deploying technology for digital activism. The reliance on blockchain technology is important in the creation and protection of unique identities within a socioeconomy that also guarantees the ability to transact, with successes already recorded in dealings of Non Fungible Technologies. This also redefines the future of crowd-sourcing, the disbursements of funds, and accountability for social movements. The economy of protests in Nigeria for instance depends on donations, largely through crowd-sourcing, with the Feminist Coalition reporting that about N37.4 million was raised using the digital platform during the #EndSARS protests (see Adetona 2020). While the federal government, through a court order, weaponized the Terrorism Prevention Act 2013 in targeting the funding sources of the protests by freezing associated accounts (Adesomoju 2021), the Metaverse provides a supra-national platform for transactions that could evade certain oppressive tendencies of the state, especially with the workings of cryptocurrencies using the same blockchain technology. Also, with Metaverse platforms such as Decentraland, the Sandbox and Axie Infinity providing virtual real estate assets like NFTs, the future of digital activism will rely on the use of avatars as a safer remote option that mitigates the state's ability to physically assault protesters (see Lareeq 2022). Already, the creation of online identities via avatars would enhance digital mobilisation with interactivity through co-telepresence for virtual activist collaborations. It would be most beneficial for all if this was made an open accessible network and free of capitalist monopoly through collective control (Mystakidis 2022: 491; 493).

The Metaverse remains susceptible to the challenges of virtual activities, notably its susceptibility to data breaches, especially in countries like Nigeria, where internet governance

and data protection are not prioritised in terms of policy-making and implementations. As such, sensitive information, including account details, passwords and physical addresses, can be accessed to perpetuate fraud and other cyber-attacks during the transition period. Nonetheless, the future of governance with the increased presence of netizens in the Metaverse would be altered with new concerns about the protection of human rights, demands for social justice and accountability, even as there will be more opportunities for solidarities that defy borders. The future of Nigerian netizens' sociopolitics is therefore dependent on the development of virtual activism tools in advancing a consciousness within the global transition to the Metaverse. It is a Techedonic future in which technological pleasure dictates the approach to sociopolitical governance, while also containing the mechanism for its regulation as projected in the Heideggerian dialectics of technology.

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Endnotes

- 1 Pleasure is used here as a generic term for the satisfaction desired and/or derived from intentional human activities including health, accomplishment, wealth, and prestige, to mention but a few.
- 2 TikTok is a short-form video app developed in 2016 by Chinese techpreneurs with predominantly young female users and allows the creation of videos lasting for about 15 seconds (see Xu, Yan and Zhang 2019).
- 3 The comedy genre of entertainment has been popularising Nigerian English, especially with online content creators like Taaoma, Broda Shaggi and Mr Macaroni, whose work will serve as useful resources for codifying the corpus on the language version.
- 4 The #EndSARS protests were organized around cells of activists across the country to display their displeasure against and opposition to the impunity perpetrated by state agents – specifically the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS), who victimize, extort and kill innocent Nigerians in the name of fighting crime. The protests are popular for the events that happened at the Lekki Toll Gate, where soldiers were deployed to enforce a state-imposed curfew and have been alleged to shoot at innocent Nigerians while the latter were waving the Nigerian flag and singing the national anthem
- 5 Mystakidis (2022) also confirms ongoing research on simulating the sensation of smell through digitalization.
- 6 Avatar is a Sanskrit word meaning a deity in human form.
- 7 The term ‘Metaverse’ is etymologically derived from the word Meta (beyond – often implying the ethereal) and Universe. It thus portrays an imagined future for the reality of the universe. It was coined by Neal Stevenson in his 1992 novel *Snow Crash*. More recently it has been powered by the Web 3.0 crypto networks, currently valued at about \$1 trillion (see Grider 2021)
- 8 Mixed reality is a context of real-time interactivity between digital data and the physical environment.