

A Review by  
Yushau A. Shuaib



National Information Technology  
Development Agency

**AGENCY:**  
*Image Merchants Promotion*

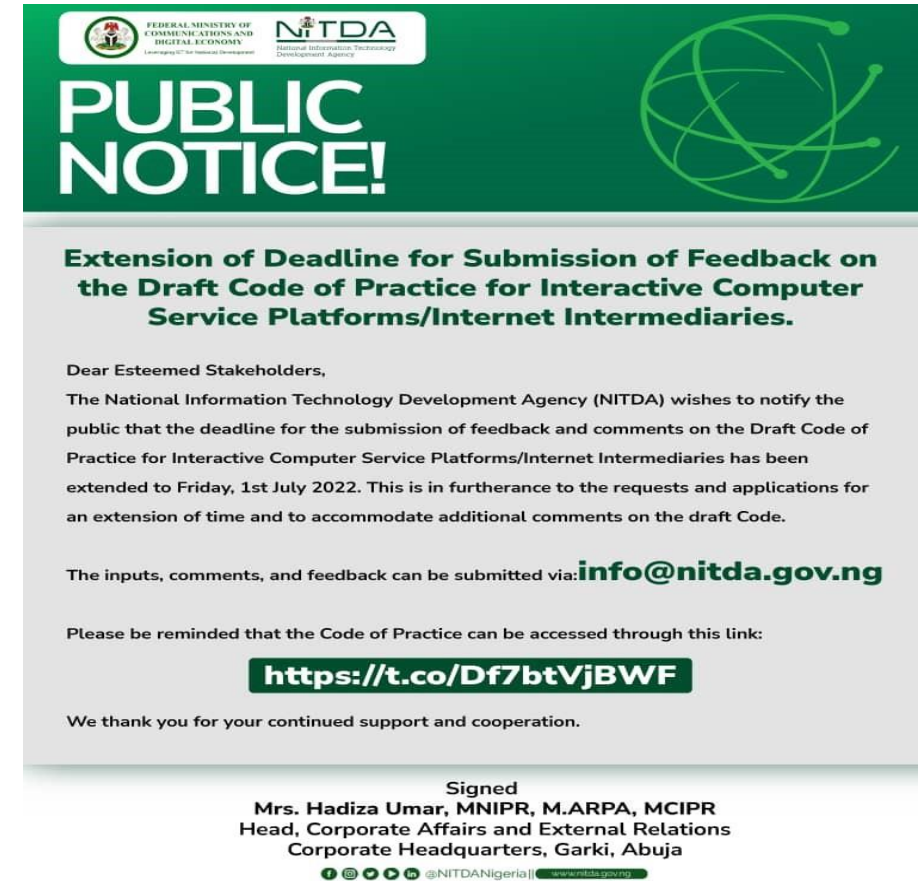
**CLIENT: NITDA**

**TITLE: On Social Media Code  
of Practice**

# SUMMARY

Immediately a Draft Code Of Practice for Social Media and Online Platforms was released, social critics condemned the document as an attempt to gag media and freedom of expression.

Using mainstream and social media, NITDA, the tech regulatory agency in Nigeria countered the criticisms and misconceptions with concrete fact and highlighting the benefits the code. The stakeholders and the public were adequately enlightened and eventually welcome the guidelines



The image is a public notice banner from NITDA. It features a green header with the NITDA logo and the text 'PUBLIC NOTICE!'. Below the header, the main text is in black on a white background. The text reads: 'Extension of Deadline for Submission of Feedback on the Draft Code of Practice for Interactive Computer Service Platforms/Internet Intermediaries.' followed by 'Dear Esteemed Stakeholders,' and a paragraph stating that the deadline for feedback has been extended to Friday, 1st July 2022. It then provides the email address 'info@nitda.gov.ng' for submitting feedback. A link 'https://t.co/Df7btVjBWF' is provided for accessing the Code of Practice. The notice concludes with a thank you and a signature block for Mrs. Hadiza Umar, MNIPR, M.ARPA, MCIPR, Head, Corporate Affairs and External Relations, Corporate Headquarters, Garki, Abuja. Social media handles for NITDA are also listed at the bottom.

**PUBLIC NOTICE!**

**Extension of Deadline for Submission of Feedback on the Draft Code of Practice for Interactive Computer Service Platforms/Internet Intermediaries.**

Dear Esteemed Stakeholders,

The National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA) wishes to notify the public that the deadline for the submission of feedback and comments on the Draft Code of Practice for Interactive Computer Service Platforms/Internet Intermediaries has been extended to Friday, 1st July 2022. This is in furtherance to the requests and applications for an extension of time and to accommodate additional comments on the draft Code.


The inputs, comments, and feedback can be submitted via: **info@nitda.gov.ng**

Please be reminded that the Code of Practice can be accessed through this link:

**<https://t.co/Df7btVjBWF>**

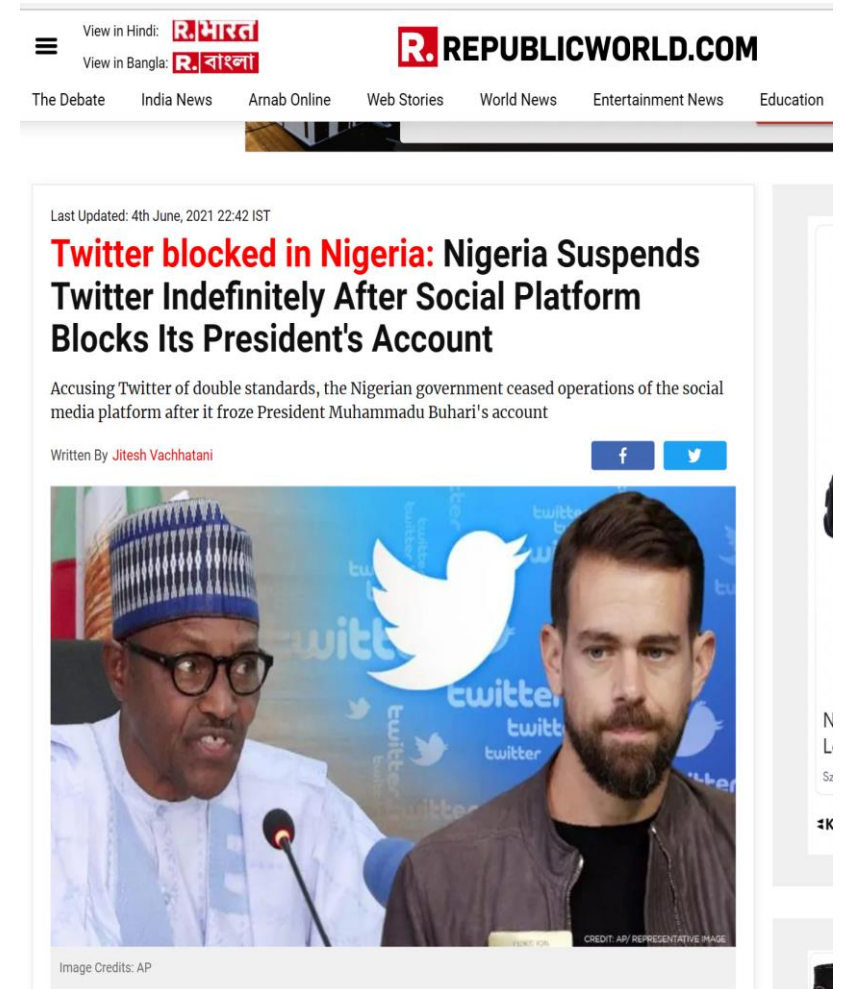
We thank you for your continued support and cooperation.

Signed  
Mrs. Hadiza Umar, MNIPR, M.ARPA, MCIPR  
Head, Corporate Affairs and External Relations  
Corporate Headquarters, Garki, Abuja

 @NITDANigeria | [www.nitda.gov.ng](https://nitda.gov.ng)

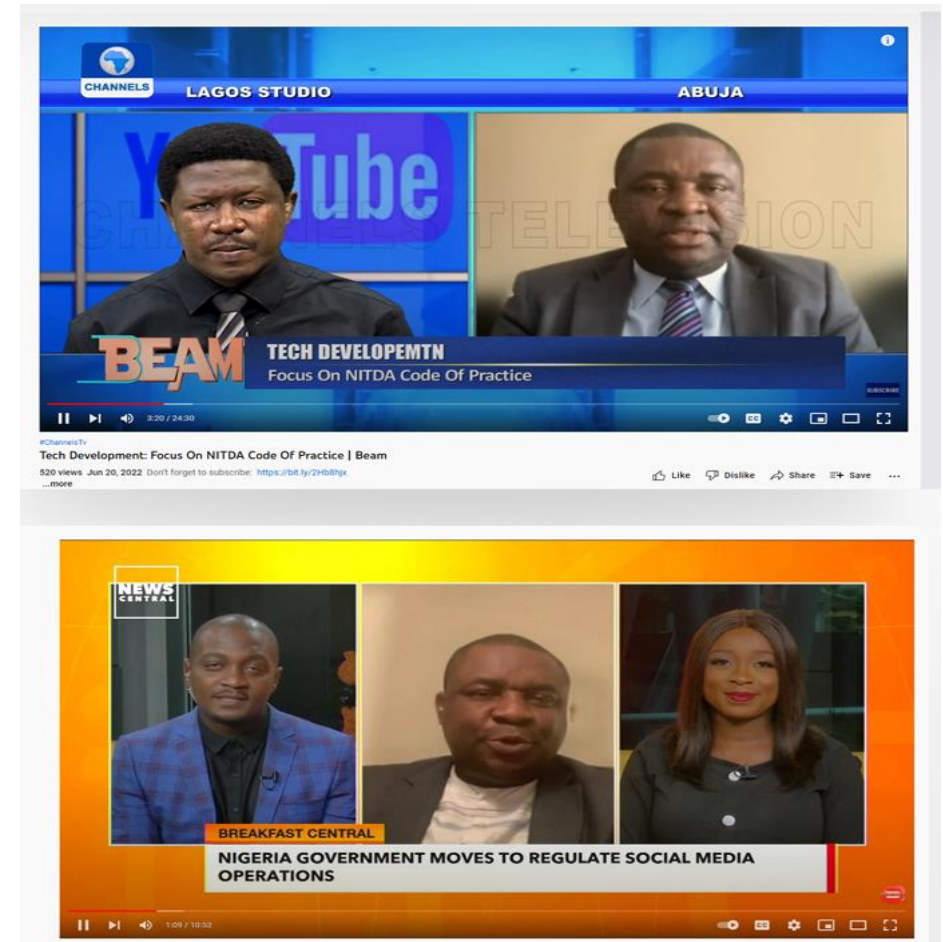
## BACKGROUND

- At a time when social media continues to thrive in an unregulated ecosystem with grave threat to Nigeria's unity in diversity, the government of Nigeria officially banned top microblogging platform - Twitter, which restricted it from operating in the country.
- This came after Twitter pulled down Nigeria's President Muhammadu Buhari's tweet after the Nigerian leader posted a tweet threatening to deal with regional and violent agitators for a secession. The government of Nigeria while announcing the suspension accused the American social media company of allowing its platform to be used "for activities that are capable of undermining Nigeria's corporate existence."
- The microblogging site reached out to the government and agreed to all the conditions laid out for its operations in Nigeria before the ban was lifted 7 months after.
- Eventually, the National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA) - the country's tech regulatory agency - released a "draft" Code Of Practice for Interactive Computer Service Platforms/Internet Intermediaries in the country. The Code was criticised by civil society actors owing to widespread mistrust and fear that government could use the instrument to gag media and freedom of expression.
- Following strategic public relations campaigns, the public were adequately enlightened of the benefit of the code and that it was a draft document was subject to review and inputs by Nigerians and stakeholders. The uproar was doused with all parties and actors agreeing to fine-tune its provisions together and pass it for act of parliament.



## PROBLEMS AND CHALLENGES

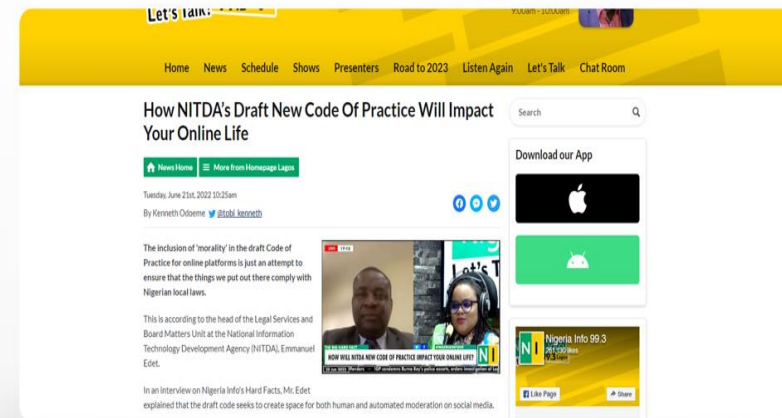
1. Misconception on the intent and purpose of NITDA's "draft" Code of Practice for Interactive Computer Service Platforms/Internet Intermediaries.
2. Civil Society and the Media played major roles in escalating the confusions and criticism on the "draft code."
3. Concerned that the code of practice was a deceptive method of regulating posts on the social media.
4. Antagonistic public that believe that they are supposed to resist everything government
5. Misconception on the keywords and terms in the document which included "Large Service Platforms" whose users are more than 100,000.
6. Concerned on "Unlawful Content" that were to be removed from platforms with the speed as prescribed in the document as well as about "Harmful Contents" that are lawful but are harmful to individuals or corporate entities in Nigeria.



# OPPORTUNITY:

- Few day after the release of the Draft Code, the European Union updated their similar Code of practice which stated that, Meta, Google, Twitter pledge to better fight fake news or risks fine.
- The Campaign reinforces these best practices in other climes to win the mind and hearts of the critics.

Some screenshots of NITDA's participation on TV and Radio programmes as seen in the images.





## OBJECTIVES OF THE PR CAMPAIGN

1. Sensitize the public about the potential benefits of the draft document towards protecting social media users on unlawful and harmful contents and their implication on the national security
2. Correct misconceptions of key terms of the documents
3. Provide facts and figures as well as similar codes in other countries used to guard abuse of social media usage.
4. Protect the reputation of Nigeria's ecosystem from the bullying of Tech Giants.
5. Woo the Nigerian citizens to accept the proposed code as a necessity to curtail fake news and hate speech that could undermine the national security.



## LOCATION AND ENDORSEMENTS

### **Geographic Location:**

Nigeria

### **Target Audience:**

Youths,

Media,

Civil Society Organisations

Tech Giants

### **Sponsor:**

National Information Technology  
Development Agency (NITDA)

### **Communications Tactics:**

Social Media

Press Conference

Article and Features

Local Language

# STAGES

**Orientation stage:** Upon lifting of the ban on Twitter by the Nigerian Government and release of the draft Code Of Practice for Interactive Computer Service Platforms/Internet Intermediaries, some sections of the media, youths and civil society organizations launched media attacks on NITDA.

**Brainstorming stage:** PR options were considered to counter and provide alternative narratives on public outrage, misconception and misinterpretation of facts.

**Decisive stage:** With a total condemnation of the document by civil society actors and some sections of the public along the misleading understanding that was a hallmark of the media and public narrative around the issue, it became expedient to immediately commission the campaign strategies outlined during brainstorming.

**Feedback stage:** Misconception corrected, civil society yielded to the need for such regulation but one whose drafting process is inclusive of all stakeholders and key actors.



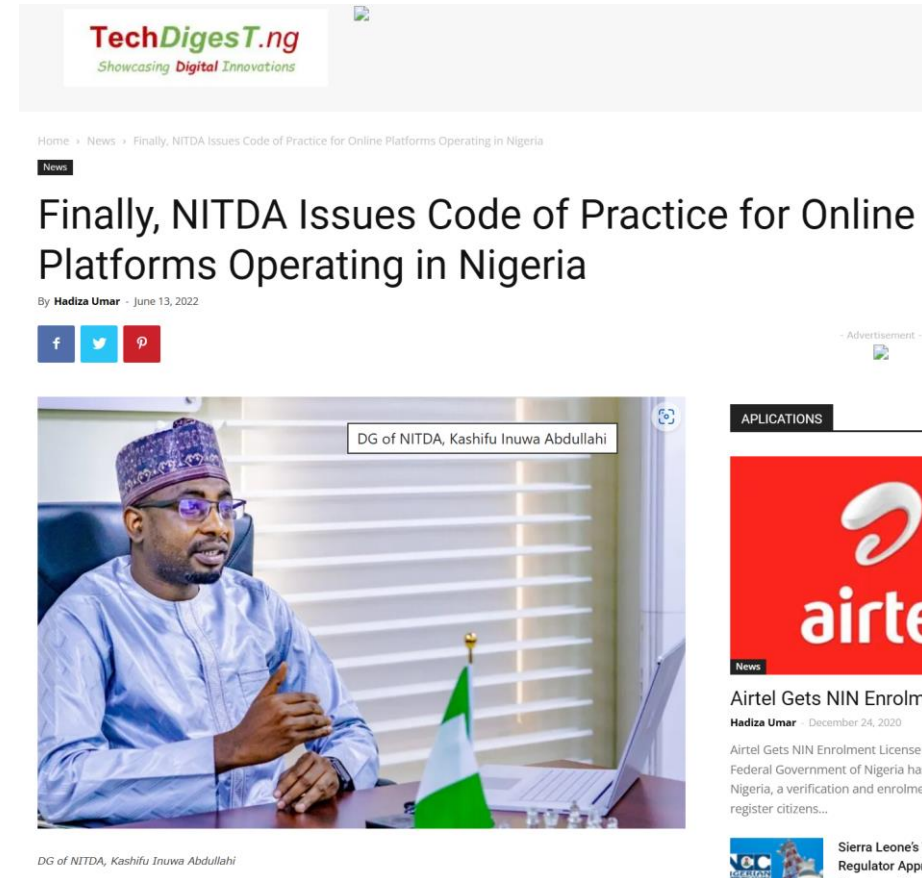


## Creative Solution:

While Social Media was used in targeting the youths and other pressure groups; traditional media and press conference were more effective in reaching the other critical stakeholders and policy makers.

## Difficulty eliminated:

Legal experts were commissioned to join the panels and commentators in tackling the legal components of the documents on the debate and public discourse.

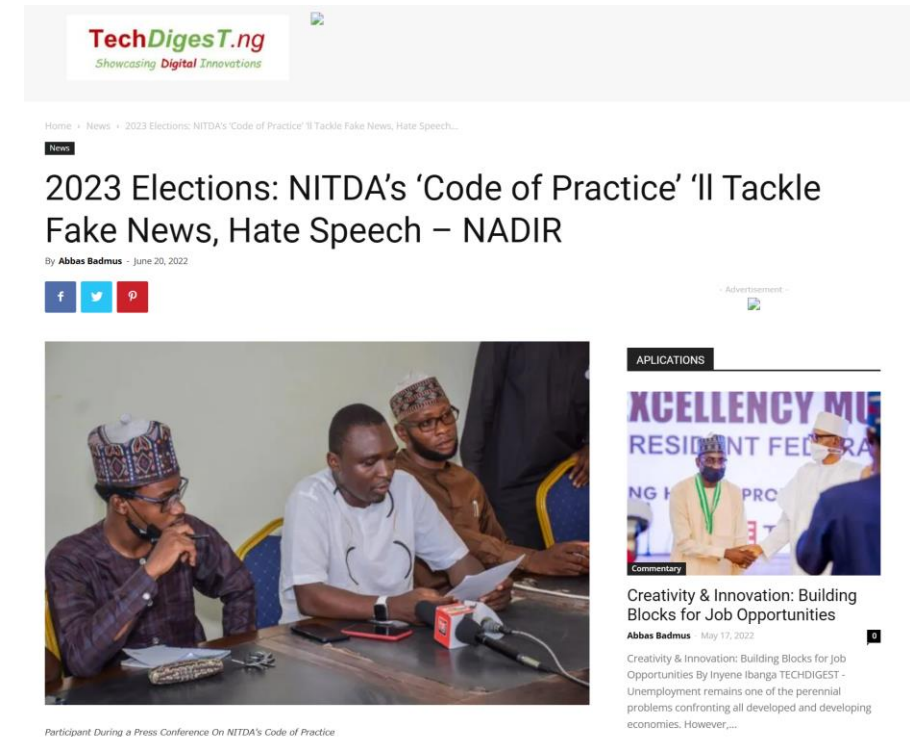


# OUTCOMES

**Shift in perspective:** The campaign generated conversations around the regulatory powers of NITDA, creating more awareness about the agency, and led to better understanding of the code of practice.

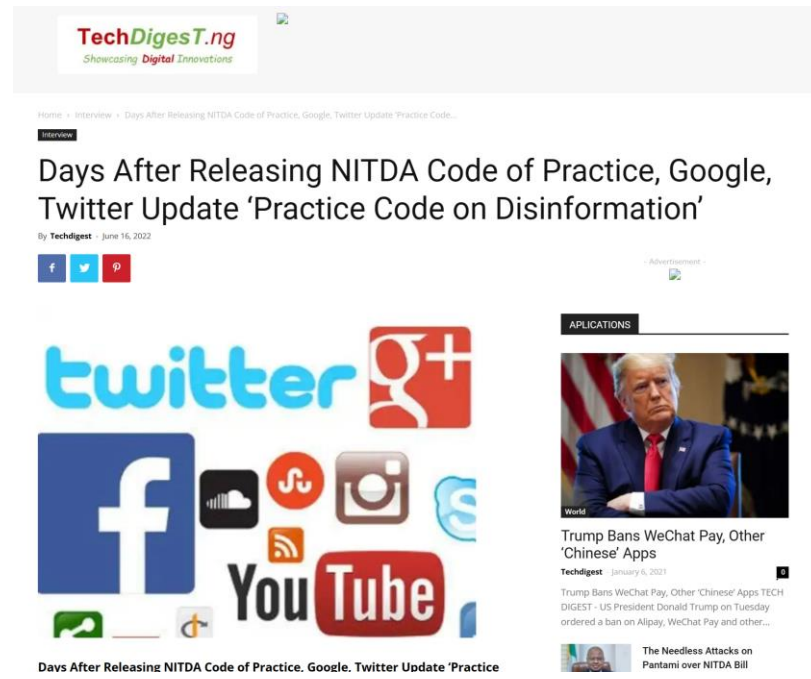
**Strengthened Stakeholders Engagement:** From Misconception to better understanding, the campaign deepening collaboration with the stakeholders towards the acceptance of the codes. Similarly, the interactive Computer Service Providers saw the need to meet with NITDA and align with the Code, strengthening stakeholders engagement.

**Dousing the tension:** The fear of mass protests and demonstrations were allayed with the prompt response through the deployments of PR strategies. It dispelled the rumours and provided better understanding on the code of practice which is in the interest of Nigerians and in line with the global standard of best practice.



# OUTCOMES

- **Crisis Team:** The experience which necessitated a crisis management response, ensure the establishment and sustenance of Crisis Management Team
- **Adoption by other Nations:** Probably coincidentally, few days after the release of the draft code, EU updated their Code of practice which stated that, Meta, Google, Twitter pledge to better fight fake news or risks fine.
- **Fairer and Positive analysis:** Many commentators provide fairer and positive commentaries on the necessity of the code. In fact massive media coverage from both conventional and online media covering the matter.
- **Tech Giants Endorsement:** With its transparent disclosure, major tech giants agree and support the code with commitment to observe and abide by the code.



## MEDIA REVIEWS ON THE CAMPAIGN

Nigeria bans Twitter after company deletes President Buhari's tweet  
<https://edition.cnn.com/2021/06/04/africa/nigeria-suspends-twitter-operations-intl/index.html>

Nigeria suspends Twitter access after president's tweet was deleted  
<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jun/04/nigeria-suspends-twitter-after-presidents-tweet-was-deleted>

After 222 days, Buhari lifts Twitter ban  
<https://punchng.com/breaking-after-222-days-buhari-lifts-twitter-ban/>

The conditions FG gave Twitter  
<https://www.vanguardngr.com/2022/01/the-conditions-fg-gave-twitter/>

Pay tax, support government to manage prohibited content... FG lists agreements reached with Twitter  
<https://www.thecable.ng/pay-tax-support-government-to-manage-prohibited-content-fg-lists-agreements-reached-with-twitter>

Agreements with Twitter not censorship – FG  
<https://guardian.ng/news/agreements-with-twitter-not-censorship-fg/>

FG: Twitter Has Accepted All Our Conditions  
<https://dailytrust.com/fg-twitter-has-accepted-all-our-conditions/>

CODE OF PRACTICE FOR INTERACTIVE COMPUTER SERVICE PLATFORMS/INTERNET INTERMEDIARIES  
<https://nitda.gov.ng/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Code-of-Practice.pdf>

Nigerian Document To Regulate Platforms Causes Uproar  
<https://cioafrica.co/nigerian-document-to-regulate-platforms-causes-uproar/>

Exploring the NITDA Code of Practice and Its Potential Impact on Social Media and Online Platforms  
<https://www.aelex.com/exploring-the-nitda-code-of-practice-and-its-potential-impact-on-social-media-and-online-platforms/>

Biden's new projet seeks to regulate Big Tech over 'harassment' on the internet  
[https://twitter.com/RT\\_com/status/1537789659723464704?t=7SmML1\\_9egzE7YDOTTflg&s=08](https://twitter.com/RT_com/status/1537789659723464704?t=7SmML1_9egzE7YDOTTflg&s=08)

After NITDA's Codes for Social Media Platforms, US Govt Inaugurates Task Force on 'Online Abuse'  
<https://pmnigeria.com/2022/06/18/after-nitda-codes-social/>

Group wants Nigeria's digital space regulated before 2023 election  
<https://guardian.ng/news/group-wants-nigerias-digital-space-regulated-before-2023-election/>

NADIR to NITDA on Code of Ethics  
[https://youtu.be/I\\_NshuiFpG0](https://youtu.be/I_NshuiFpG0)

NITDA's Code of Practice will tackle fake news, hate speech – NADIR  
<https://www.vanguardngr.com/2022/06/nitdas-code-of-practice-will-tackle-fake-news-hate-speech-nadir/>

2023 Elections: NITDA's 'Code of Practice' 'll tackle fake news, hate speech - NADIR  
<https://guardian.ng/features/media/nitdas-code-of-practice-will-tackle-fake-news-hate-speech-nadir/>

Group Lauds FG's Code of Ethics to Regulate Digital Space  
<https://nnn.ng/group-lauds-code-ethics/>