

# Labouring and Smiling: Re-Imagining Digital Colonialism in Africa, Silicon Valley Big Techs, and the Politics of Prosumer Capitalism in Nigeria

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**Abstract:** Does Africa suffer from the paucity of epistemic inquiry on digital capitalism, mostly, spearheaded by social media platforms within the confines of the global digital economy? The growing corpus of literature points to digital colonialism and prosumer capitalism as critical components in understanding the global digital economy. Yet, postcolonial Africa lags in the negotiation of power within the political economy dynamics of digital capitalism. Thus, in an age of big data, platformisation and extraction of human life, is there a reincarnation and excavation of colonialism of old in the form of digital prosumer capitalism in the continent? Using Nigeria as a geo-economic prism, the paper reimagines digital colonialism from a critical perspective. It seeks to discharge the underlying appropriation of economic power through digital colonialism; and show how prosumer capitalism grounds its practices in Nigeria, thereby, re-centring the debate on digital economic inequalities given the global digital capitalism paradigm.

**Keywords:** Africa, Big Techs, data, digital colonialism, prosumer capitalism, platforms, Nigeria

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## 1. Introduction

Historically, the expansive nature of capitalism has been pervasive, penetrating nearly all spheres of our social being, morphing into different shades, times, media, and communication platforms. Following in that direction are the domains of communication capitalism, digital capitalism, information capitalism, and network capitalism (Fuchs 2009; Dean 2005; Fitzpatrick 2002; Schiller 2000) which have now recentred the debate on the political economy of communication as African societies, Nigeria and the world evolve in a supersonic speed. Van Dijck (2014) hypothesised about the spacious digital alteration of our social life through metadata, from insignificant platform-mediated products to valuable products that are augmented, extracted, and repurposed as substantial products and part of economic production. Far back in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, Marx (1894) talked about the rapid expansion of capitalist production in a scientific bourgeois economy, where capitalism prevails through the capitalist modes of production. Most importantly, Africa is considered a huge supplier of resources and raw materials that often ignite innovations, mostly, through the mechanism of global capitalism. Thus, the spread of digital capitalism, and its deep roots through the frontiers of

prosumer culture in the digital world is apparently instrumental to the re-enactment of colonialism in today's African digital spaces. Most often, the spread of social media platforms and the economic impact and incentives asserted by Silicon Valley Big Techs have created ecstatic scenes among African folks and even researchers with a grasp of Africa's digital ecosystem. This revolves around the horizons of colonialism, post-colonial and neoliberal economic activities (Oyedemi 2019), such that, an appraisal of the expansion of digital colonialism and prosumer capitalism within the continent becomes imperative because of the growing calls for African digital epistemic knowledge production (Schoon et al. 2020).

This expansionist tendency of capitalism has been spearheaded in recent times through digital technologies and network platforms, creating new economic geographies of capitalism and the reincarnation of colonialism particularly within the realm of dominance and labour exploitation (Howson et al. 2021; Taffel 2021; Jimenez 2020; Segura and Waisbord 2019) in places like Africa and countries like Nigeria. Other scholars have also approached the colonality of digital technologies from a racial standpoint (Benjamin 2019; Melamed 2015), further calibrating Africa's place in global economic and digital inequalities. However, in an age of remediation of both online and offline spaces and integrated hybridity between the digital and physical spaces (Willems 2019; No et al. 2016), the universality of this phenomenon is not just by simply influencing the global political economy but also contemporary global communication and information ecosystem and the digital world in particular. Yet, the ubiquitous and borderless landscape of digital networks, mostly, American-based Silicon Valley Big Techs tend to spread capitalism and excavate colonialism in equal measure, and in the same swoop erecting economic dichotomies and inequality, mostly through prosumer cultures (see Figure 1) enabled by cultural shifts such as Americanization, McDonaldization, globalization, interculturality, and enforcement of global homogeneity both within the public and digital spaces (Antonio and Bananno 2000; van Elteren 2006; Fraysse & O'Neil 2015; Hallin and Mancini 2004; Mensah et al. 2018; Ritzer 2008). How then do all these intersecting dynamics of digital colonialism and prosumer capitalism hold sway in Africa and Nigeria in particular?

Further, Zuboff (2019) in a sense heralded these shifts, being taken over by information and communication technologies with deep capitalist roots permeating our day-to-day life and dictating every sphere of social participation. A broader context of this trajectory is that the concentration of hysterical neoliberal market systems and economy based on information (Mason 2015), non-optional, ubiquitous, and additive social networks (McChesney 2013) and the victimhood of new colonialism created through data collection and appropriation of human life (Couldry and Mejias 2019) in places like Africa tends to define modern-day capitalism in all facets *à la* colonialism. Mejias and Couldry (2024) further equated data colonialism with the confiscation of territories in Africa in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Thus, the role of media and communication cannot be isolated from the global crisis of capitalism, whether from the standpoint of neoliberal digital capitalism or the neo-Keynesian model in a digital sense (Chakravartty and Schiller 2010; Means 2015), especially, that which focuses on economic growth and stability without recourse to employment, labour, wages, and workers benefits. Accordingly, it is this nexus and semblance with the capitalism of old that have compelled scholars to associate the prevailing economic influence of digital media with historical colonialism (Couldry and Mejias 2019; Mejias and Couldry 2024; Schneider 2022). Scholarly interrogation of digital colonialism often strives to showcase empirical cases and agencies of exploitation, profiteering, unpaid labour, *unconscious* production, and

resumption through what Couldry and Mejias (2019) termed distant digital communication infrastructure as the new form of capitalism.

A corpus of literature over the years has portrayed the degree to which this digital colonialism seems to be taking the form and shape of prosumer capitalism (Benyera 2021; Couldry and Mejias 2019; Fuchs 2020, 2009; Ramnarain and Govender 2013; Schneider 2022), such that, like in the past, the West is recentred as the dominant player. As Flew (2007, 31) aptly captured it, this overriding economic influence of Silicon Valley Big Techs comes with “existing economic structures of dominance in the media and communication industries...as site of cultural influence; the extension of corporate control; and growing commodification of media forms...” Taking cognisance of this structure, and as the world and the African continent become more digitalized in the platform society (Poell et al. 2021; van Dijck et al. 2018), the digital becomes a form of commodity and a productive silo for both production and consumption in the sight of the producer (West) and consumer (Africa). Invariably, data extraction and its agencies relatively connote another form of colonialism (Couldry and Mejias 2018). The puzzle in contemporary times is the combination of the channels of production and consumption, which Toffler (1981) first hypnotized as prosumer. Fraysse and O’Neil (2015, 3) stressed that structures of separation are constantly being undermined, “such as that between production and consumption” around the world, even in places like Nigeria. As a result of this, the ensuing commodification of digital consumption has habitually expanded both the theoretical and conceptual scopes of not just capitalism, but also colonialism, mostly within the confines of the African continent.

Hence, to fathom today’s digital colonialism, there is an urgency to unearth the dynamics of new media communication technologies and platform capitalism (Papadimitropoulos 2021; Vallas 2019; Langley and Leyshon 2017), and the extent they reincarnate historical colonialism within the prisms of labour, wages, and capital. In this study, attempts have been made to demonstrate not just the coloniality of digital platforms, but also how social media platforms help to dichotomise social economic inequality within digital capitalism. (see Figure 1 for further elucidation). Hence, the question is not whether there are similarities between the colonialism of old and today’s digital colonialism, but the form and the spacious nature with which they operationalised these concepts seem to be at the centre of the intellectual debate, and how capitalism and colonialism converged digitally. Some scholars have also argued that this convergence somehow reinvokes the interrelationship between capitalism and colonialism (Madianou 2019; Papacharassi 2015), particularly, in the manner American Big Tech companies entrenched their corporate power (Flew 2007), heavily skewed economic gains and profits (Collier 2018) and the monopolisation for economic exploitation, undermining local markets and creation of dependency (Kwet 2021). These trajectories therefore offer us a glimpse to grasp the cascading digital capitalist colonialism in today’s world. Mason (2015; xiv) explained that resistance to neoliberalism and capitalism has encountered a failure on several fronts, given that, capitalism’s adaptability to changes enables the phenomenon to morph and mutate, fortifying itself against opposition, risks, and dangers, stressing that “information is different from every previous technology... its spontaneous tendency is to dissolve markets, destroy ownership and break down the relationship between work and wages. And that is the deep background to the crisis we are living through.”

Further, despite this growing crisis associated with digital capitalism, there is not enough scholarly intervention in the (de)construction of digital colonialism and prosumer capitalism on social network platforms within the context of Africa and the continent’s biggest economy, Nigeria. As the continent becomes more engrained in

the digital space, memories of unequal colonial economic power between African states and American Big Techs seem to be recalibrating historical colonialism in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries where African territories were amassed; slaves and raw materials shifted to the West in boosting the industrial revolution (Berg and Hudson 2023; Eltis and Engerman 2000). In today's platformisation of society (Casilli and Gutierrez 2019; Poell et al. 2021), both the West and the Global South face an equilibrium in being exploited by Silicon Valley Big Techs in a colonial-like manner (The New York Review 2023). Unlike the interventionist approaches of the American government and the European Economic Council (ECC) like the European Union's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) in holding social network platforms accountable (Gorwa and Ash 2020; Flew et al. 2019), no such policy has been enacted by the African Union (AU), even on country-level. Such moves remain peripheral. This situation advances the imbalance of economic power in the age of digital capitalism. Figure 1 lays out this social-economic imbalance and inequality as obtainable in Nigeria, where Silicon Valley Big Techs are positioned for enormous capital accumulation, while the state focuses on taxable activities of the Big Techs, and content creators who generate income for the Big Techs are reduced to mere prosumers without wages.

With Africa having encountered both phases of colonialism – the historical and contemporary digital colonialism – and being the last entrant in the global economic power equation, a critical examination of digital colonialism and prosumer capitalism is key in unravelling these dimensions because of the thematic concentration of this volume – *Critical Perspectives on Digital Capitalism*. The work is not geared towards delving into the battles of epistemological studies centred on Anglophone and Eurocentric constructivism of (de)coloniality. However, the article explores the dynamics of digital colonialism and prosumer capitalism in Africa, relying on Nigeria as the continent's biggest economy by focusing on the politics, practices, and negotiation of power. It seeks to discharge the underlying appropriation of economic power through digital platforms like Google, Facebook and Twitter, and critique how prosumer capitalism grounds its practices in Nigeria. Succinctly, the article contributes to the growing field of the political economy paradigm of digital capitalism, repurposing the debate of digital economic inequalities through the African lens that has characterised global information communication capitalism for far more than three decades now. The paper therefore compels a scholarly endeavour that seeks to breach the acquisitive and materialistic gap that pervades African digital capitalism and colonialism, as far as digital labour and prosumer culture are concerned.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Re-Imagining Digital Colonialism in Africa and the Nexus with Communication Capitalism

With colonialism as a centrifugal lens to envisage the African continent, scholars explained that modern-day colonialism seems to have kick-started with the Portuguese searching for trade and commerce (capitalism) in the 1400s (Jeronimo 2018; Smilak and Putman 2022) in Africa and the rest of the world. According to Keating (2013), colonialism is still continually felt to date. This continuity has over a century morphed from colonialism – neo-colonialism – to contemporary digital colonialism, *vis-à-vis* communication capitalism, rebranding both the trenches of capitalism that spearheaded colonialism itself in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. What then enhanced historical colonialism? Tracing Africa's colonial history, Crowder (2023) observed that between 1885 and 1906

where Western colonialism subjected the continent to Western European rule, communication and technological revolution also accounted for the entrenchment of colonialism during that era. Often, these communication and technological infrastructures are transposed and transplanted from the West to Africa for colonial purposes (Eribo and Jong-Ebot 1997). Worth (2014) also collaborated with this line of thought, focusing on India and the impact of British colonialism in that country using colonial media and technologies to spread colonialism. A broader clarification has been provided in Figure 1 to the effect of media technologies' interactions with capitalism and their embrace of colonial threads.

The trajectory of historical colonialism as studies show, tends to morph, fitting into the existential mode of production and targeting capital at a particular point in time, with slavery keying first into primitive capitalism (Anstey 1968; Ocheni and Nwankwo 2012), and colonialism feeding the productive needs of the industrial revolution (Benyera 2022; Berg and Hudson 2023). With the entry of digital capitalism, it can therefore be argued that since the 18<sup>th</sup> century, colonialism has been a determinant of the modes of production. Whether that which is associated with raw material and labour in plantation fields in the Americas and industrial revolutions in the West then, or the *unconscious* prosumer version currently linked to digitalization. Convincedly, both colonialism and modes of production are linked. In a sense, the influence of colonialism over two centuries now in whatever form and prism it is understood from, has been one of the most salient factors in whether a society catches up or falters with developmental goals. Some scholars like Acemoglu and Robinson (2017, 81) agree that there is a logic in which colonialism contributed to shaping “modern inequality in several fundamental, but heterogenous ways” such that, there is a constant divide in the supremacy of the means of production and the ensuing capitalism that emanates from such colonial activity.

For Africa, colonialism has different levels of impact, which Acemoglu and Robinson (2017) ascribed as the *heterogenous effects* of colonialism, where it ushered in some level of development for the colonizer and left negative economic consequences for the colonised. Thus, contemporary studies exploring colonialism, the fourth industrial revolution, digitalization and the ubiquitous corporate power of American Silicon Valley Big Tech companies locate a high degree of interrelationship and semblance with historical colonialism and today's digital capitalism (Benyera 2021; Couldry and Mejias 2019; Kwet 2019). Critically, since the turn of the century and the advancement of digital technologies, the debate over Western and American Big Tech companies' transposition of colonialism to digital coloniality has also gained tremendous currency. Van den Scott (2017) and Stingl (2016) chronicled this debate, arguing that, the digital space, beyond erecting enclaves and domains of inequality, extends the coloniality of power relations in the appropriation of human life for surplus capital and profiteering.

## 2.2. Facing Digital Capitalism as New Colonialism

The consideration of digital capitalism in contemporary colonialism and how Africa remains the whipping boy of the world – at the receiving end of global economic inequality signifies the repeat of history to an extent. The reason is not far-fetched. For more than a decade now, while other regions and continents are making frantic efforts to equalize power with Silicon Valley Big Techs, there has been no drive of sorts until recently when some autocratic African states dreaded the impact of social media networks on their autocratic power and rising opposition to their perpetuation in office beyond term limits that they began to beam their searchlights on social media Big Techs. In Nigeria for instance, it took X (Twitter) to delete then President Muhammadu

Buhari's genocidal Tweet on Biafra, before the government stepped in to tighten regulation of Silicon Valley Big Techs operating in the country (Anyim 2021; Ebim et al. 2022; Endong and Obi 2022; Reuters 2021). Conversely, the political economy dynamics remain in the mould of an ungoverned economic territory where most of the Big Techs now dominate Africa's digital space with all the agencies of capitalism and its *colonial* modes of production. This digital economic exploitation is not a one-way traffic, where foreign digital platforms extract resources – human life activities as labour and capital. There is also another layer of economic exploitation that comes with economic value, being that, while African states now collect taxes from the Big Techs, online citizens who engage in prosumption – *fun labour* are not afforded wages (see Figure 1 for further clarification). In both ways, there is a replica of capitalism and colonialism as well.

It is for this replication that digital capitalism is envisaged in the Global South, Africa specifically, as the new form of colonialism, where there are vast economic resources and extraction of human life of economic value like historical colonialism, fixated on human labour and annexation of large territories (Coudry and Mejias 2019). Even in the formal sector of the gig economy, as Anwar and Graham (2020) show, African workers still face a lack of autonomy and economic power bargain in many respects. These contradictions beyond their semblance with historical colonialism indicate the re-enactment of old colonial methods as new forms of colonialism, in which, Africa remains a focal point. Fuchs and Horak (2008) recognised that Africa is at the centre of geographical global inequality, and since technology is inversely linked to material wealth, and wealth production is a by-product of technology, Sub-Saharan Africa therefore deserves more than passive attention in the understanding of global digital capitalism and colonialism. The imperative of this call-to-action stems from the realities of Africa's victimhood in both historical and digital colonialism, currently expanded by the convergence of technology and prosumption. The nexus between technology, on the one hand, and digital prosumption, on the other hand, underscores what Schiwy et al. (2011) tagged the technology of global capitalism with continuities of colonialism as well.

### 3. Digital Labour and Prosumer Capitalism: Wither Africa?

The idea of digital labour or what is colloquially referred to as work has ignited several debates about its categorisation and classification for some time now. Dorschel (2022), for instance, considers such arguments on the classification of whether digital labourers should be categorised as gig workers, crowd workers, prosumers, or cyber proletariats as outdated, given that social scientists tend not only to situate such debates to the lower occupational strata of digital labour, but also leave what he termed a sociological blind spot on upscale gig workers. Fuchs (2014) also showed the different levels of digital labour by portraying how low-level workers from the Congo Democratic Republic, China, Cambodia, India etc. contribute to the production of digital and technological gadgets to mirror the pragmatism of different layers of digital labour rather than the sole or overt concentration on social enquiry of the phenomenon. In this same journal, Fuchs and Sevignani (2013) further postulated the different digital dimensions of work ranging from *communicative work*, *cooperative work*, and *cognitive work*, arguing for the dichotomy between digital labour and work.

Notwithstanding the different debates on the categorisation of digital workers as cyber proletariats (Dyer-Witthford 2015; Huw 2001), the quantified worker (Ajunwa 2023), or underclass workers (Dawson 2002), other scholars insist on a broader uniformity in the classification of digital labour for both white-collar and low-level digital

workers (Dorchels 2022). In Africa, the focus is primarily on digital prosumer workers – the producers of data, that is sold to advertisers for capital and profits whether it is Google, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram or TikTok. This does not in any way downplay the place of other gig workers as Dorschel (2022) kicked against, but rather seeks to topicalise the pervasive nature of such *unpaid* labour in the digital space and how that evolves and feeds into prosumer capitalism in the continent. The lack of scholarly research on the African digital prosumer workers compels further exploration in that regard. Likewise, given the paucity of such research in this area, it has become critical to ascertain how digital labour and prosumption are fostered and negotiated in Nigeria, given that, digital labour has been envisaged as emblematic of future work (Berg et al. 2018).

Further, the categorisation of digital labour, the multi-layered markets, and the whole gamut of prosumption are at the centre of digital capitalism in a sense (Fuchs 2014; Papadimitropoulos and Malamidis 2024; Ritzer 2015; Staab 2017), more so, within the African continent. This feeds into the conceptual frame of consumer capitalism within a larger scope. As Lewis (2013) posits, consumer capitalism operates with a sense of fluidity, inevitability, and also government-backed threads – there is therefore some relatability of consumer capitalism and prosumer capitalism within the digital space. Through digital prosumption, American-based Silicon Valley Big Techs often breach economic uniformity for cases of dichotomy as expounded in Figure 1, whereby, i) the Big Techs are aligned for greater capital accumulation (surplus capital) from the labour and consumption of citizens (prosumers); ii) the state attracts taxable income and economic benefits from the Big Techs as a result of prosumer activities; and iii) prosumers constitute the worst off – who laboured without pay and wages. However, within the political economy prism, prosumer labour in Africa can be distinguished from that of the West and even Asia, considering that, there are no economic safety nets nor social welfare systems to enable the redistribution of the taxable income derived from taxing Big Techs to the poor or prosumers. Even if the argument can be made that such taxable income could be railroaded to social safety nets for the benefit of the general population, the opaqueness of the system within the continent makes it intractable.

Overall, digital labour in Africa, whether as a gig working job or unpaid digital prosumption indicates vast cases of precarity, inequalities and vulnerabilities (Anwar 2022; Anwar and Graham 2022). Other observers like Ben Tarnoff further supported these thoughts, adding that, “an Internet dominated by profit motive is also an Internet that... intensifies various kinds of social inequalities” (Nelson 2023). Therefore, a critical examination of digital labour within the continent provides another view of extractive commodities with various layers of imbalance and contradictions. Some of these contradictions could be in what Wittel (2015) called *free labour* and other human productive activities outside the purview of wage-based commodification of labour. Wittel then submitted that more research should be dedicated to peer production and non-market production associated with digital prosumption. Yet, in a continent of more than 1 billion people, with about 570 million internet users (Statista 2023), the economic value of such a number of users has wider implications for global digital capitalism.

#### **4. The Politics and Practices of Prosumer Capitalism: Negotiation and Exclusion in Nigerian Digital Spaces**

The Nigerian economy with a Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of about \$506 billion is the biggest economy in Africa: about 122 million people use the Internet and 31.6 million are Social Media users out of about 210 million population, which has remained

steady since 2017 (Statista 2023). According to Statcounter (2023), out of the 31.6 million social media users, Facebook account for 48.74%; Twitter 20.74%; Instagram 13.9%; YouTube 7.8%; Pinterest 7.7% and LinkedIn 0.53%. Facebook for example has about 21.8 million users; Twitter users X (Twitter) 5 million users (World Population Review 2023) among other social media networks. As a result of these statistics and millions of social media users in Nigeria, or what Oyedemi (2019, 2056) observed as “a burgeoning market for digital communication products”, it can be adduced that a high percentage of citizens engage in prosumption activities, or what Fuchs (2014) described as *play labour*. This study categorised all labour activities without pay and wages in the form of prosumption as *fun labour*.

Estimates from the Nigerian Bureau of Statistics (NBS) indicate that the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) sector contributed about 18.44% to Nigeria’s GDP (The Guardian 2022). According to TRT Africa (2023), American Silicon Valley social media platforms paid the Nigerian government about \$1.3 billion between January 2022 to March 2023. Yet, there is obvious silence about digital labourers and prosumers in Nigeria who produce the User Generated Content (UGC) that is marketed to advertisers by Facebook, WhatsApp, X (Twitter), Instagram among others. While negotiations take place between Silicon Valley Big Techs and the Nigerian state (TRT Africa 2023) in view of tech tax, digital prosumers are left out of the equation, with only promises of enhancement of access to digital platforms for prosumption activities – production and consumption that aid the collation of users’ data and extraction of human life. Just like it has been proven in Ghana and Kenya (Aljazeera 2017), Big Techs like Facebook have increased what Oyedemi (2019) called benevolent capitalism or philanthrocapitalism by offering “Free Basics” – where users connect to the platform for free in Nigeria. This digital connection to Facebook offered to users has been found not for the improvement of digital equality and benefits, but for the enhancement of digital prosumption and data collection (Aljazeera 2017).

This practice has been followed with visits by Facebook’s founder, Mark Zuckerberg, and X (Twitter) officials to Lagos, Nigeria’s commercial capital and economic nerve centre and Africa’s 11<sup>th</sup> economy (Heinrich Boll Stiftung 2015) and largest start-up capital (Weforum 2022) with pledges of supporting digital start-up in the country (Weetracker 2019; The Guardian 2018). Beneath these overtures, cases of data extraction, unpaid labour and other extractive activities are tilted toward data accumulation for profits and surplus capital, bolstering the economic-value agenda of the Big Techs – mostly, devoid of wages. Among the Silicon Valley Big Techs, X (Twitter) appears to be more sophisticated in the promotion of prosumer culture. In 2023, X announced that revenue derived from advertisements from content and data would be shared with the respective content creators and online influencers who created them (Reuters 2023). In Nigeria, for instance, this was followed by the payment to some Nigerian content creators and digital influencers in August 2023 (The Cable 2023). That Elon Musk could consider paying for online influence goes to explain the level of exploitation of digital capitalism over all these years. Surprisingly, in September 2023, Musk announced that users on the X platform would be charged a subscription fee (The Guardian 2023). In all, X gives users on its platform on the right hand, and takes back from the left hand, showing the intricacies of economic exploitation in the digital platforms. This phenomenon portrays the cases of digital capitalism in line with the economic value that Silicon Valley Big Techs attract in isolation of wages for the creators of content and prosumers. This often feeds into the broader web of prosumption and global digital capitalism.



Figure 1 below provides this segmentation within the realm of digital colonialism and prosumer capitalism. Here, Silicon Valley Big Techs such as Facebook, Instagram, and X (Twitter), but also TikTok deploy their platforms for data extraction, online production and consumption, as online users and content creators purchase data and engage in fun labour. For consolidation of such capitalist tendencies, the Big Techs adopt benevolent capitalism, philanthrocapitalism, support for local start-ups or buy-over, frenzy visits by Big Techs chief executives, engaging with youth-friendly projects and provision of free basics. However, the state targets social media platforms and Big Techs for taxation; while online users and content creators generate the wealth, spend on data, and go without wages. The amalgam of these practices in prosumer capitalism and data accumulation and extraction pans out into the effect of Big Tech politics. In Big Tech politics, there is the establishment of state-corporate interrelationship, as the state becomes more reliant on Big Techs; Big Techs in turn side-step state control and overreach the state in several ways, and feed more from prosumer practices (Monsees et al. 2023; Srivastava 2021). Still, digital prosumers, online users and content creators remain isolated.

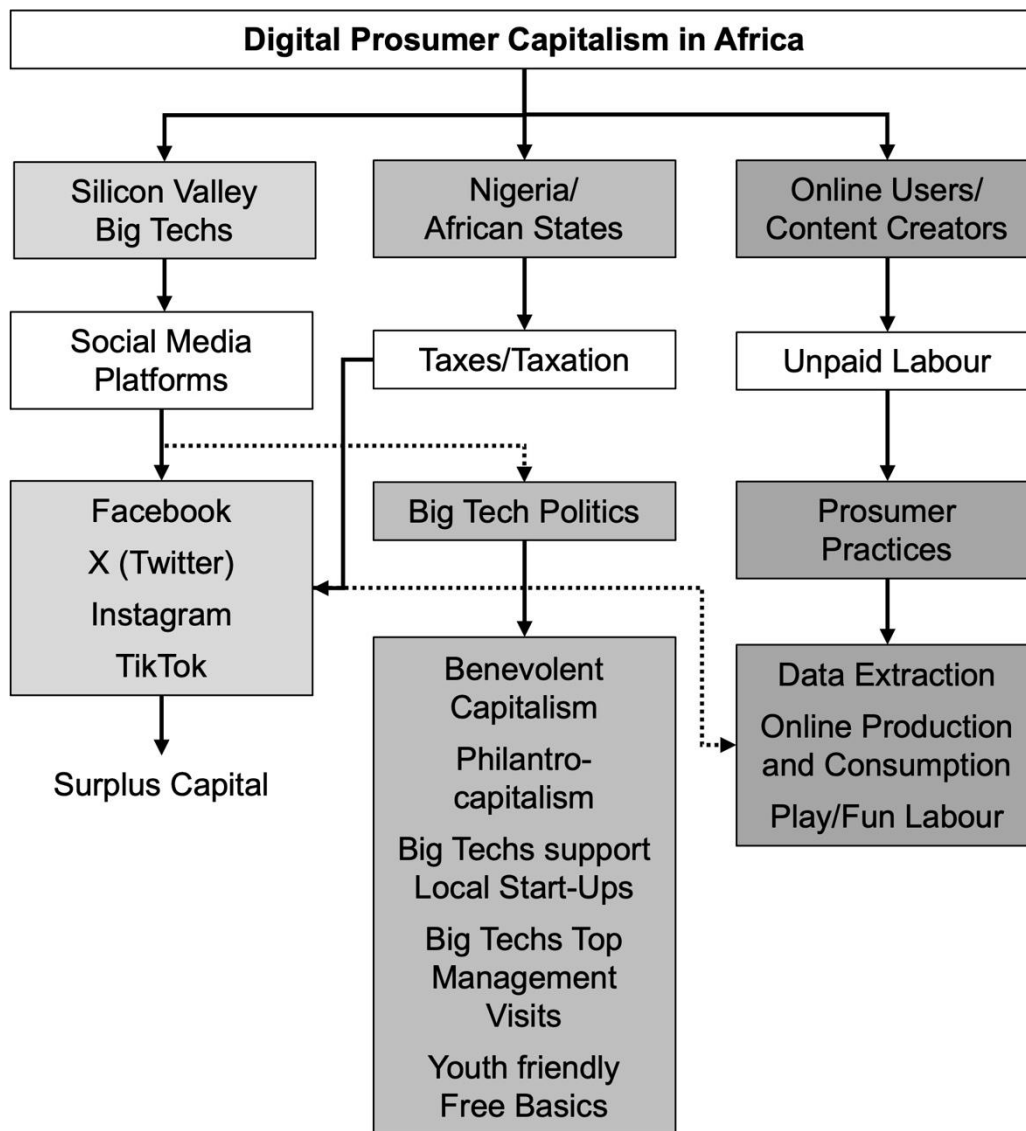


Figure 1: Digital Prosumer Capitalism in Africa

## 5. Conclusion

The propagation and expansion of digital capitalism, and its entrenchment through the frontiers of prosumer culture in the digital spaces remain key in the return of colonialism in today's African spaces. In some cases, the spread of social media platforms and the economic influence asserted by Silicon Valley Big Techs has been euphoric among Africans and even researchers with an understanding of the continent's digital world. The drive for extraction of data, targeting human life and the economic value attached to all these digital products have been downplayed extensively in research. This paper seeks to reignite that debate front and centre and push for more scholarly nuances in the field of African digital capitalism.

Therefore, this paper explores the degree to which the practices of digital labour, prosumption, data consumption and extraction of human life activities in the digital spaces reincarnate the nostalgic spirit of colonialism of old in Africa. It lays out the intersection of prosumer culture in the digital spaces, averring the disentanglement between capital – revenue generated from the economic value activities of Silicon Valley Big Techs on one hand and content creators, gig influencers, and prosumers who produce these digital products but go on without pay and wages. Though this paper does not completely fulfil the empirical research gap of African prosumers, particularly, in understanding their impulses on free and unpaid digital labour, it however, presents the practical and conceptual scope upon which digital economic inequalities within the realm of digital capitalism are fostered and entrenched in the continent, specifically, Nigeria.

Overall, the essence is to nudge this scholarly debate on digital capitalism further, bringing to bear the connection of digital labour, the economic-value chain therefrom prosumer culture, which is accumulated by Silicon Valley Big Techs to the complete neglect of material modes of production and attendant wages. The crux of this debate should therefore be centred on how Africa can (re)negotiate its path, not just for taxation purposes, but that which also profits the African digital prosumers. The paper therefore challenges other scholarly focus on global digital capitalism in Africa to spring from that materialistic gap associated with the negation of wages therefrom economic-value digital labour in the world of prosumer *vis-à-vis* digital capitalism.

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