Twitter Thread by Silver Kayondo

Silver Kayondo
@SilverKayondo

Last weekend, I made a threat on the ongoing #SocialMedia shutdown in Uganda and some implications on the future of #internet & Uganda's #digital agenda.

The thread attracted a lot of engagement and questions. Tonight, I will share some final thoughts on the subject. (1)

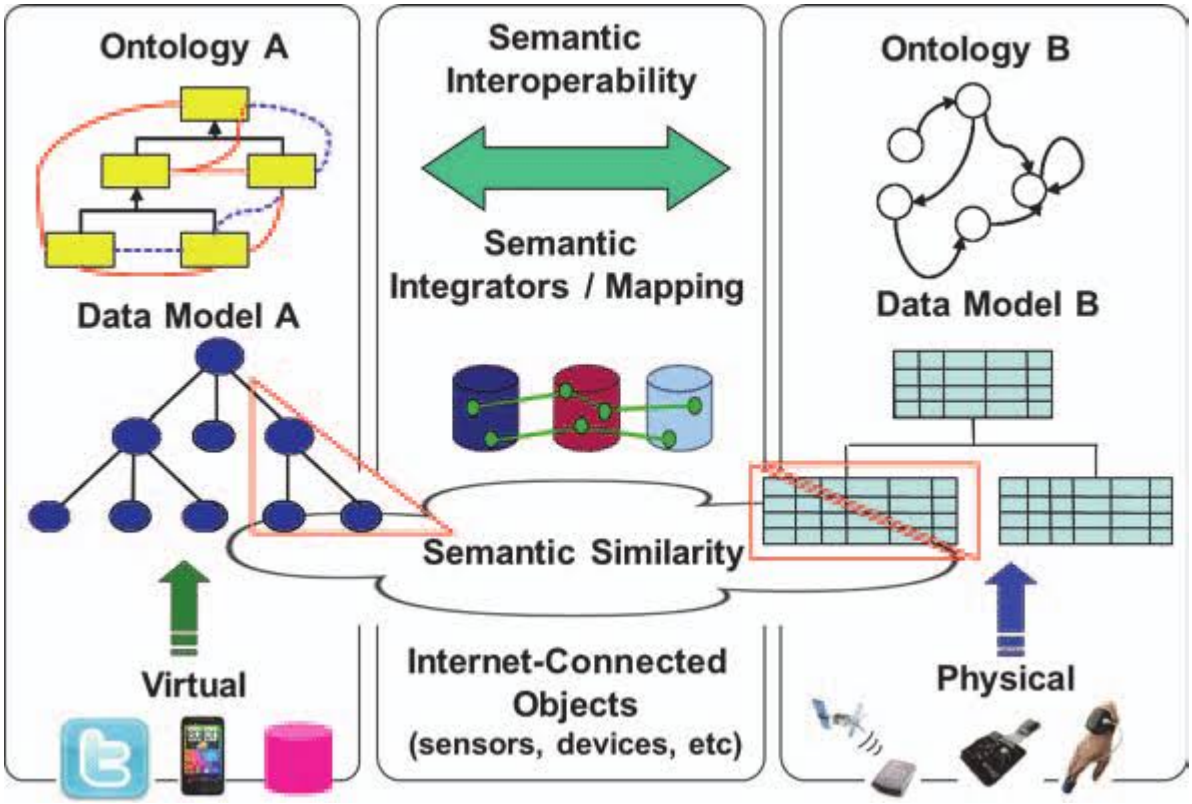
Conceptually, social media sites are the largest on-boarding platforms for internet users in Uganda. Notably, Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, Instagram & Snapchat attract the highest internet traffic- which drives demand for other platform services e.g Google and Zoom recently.



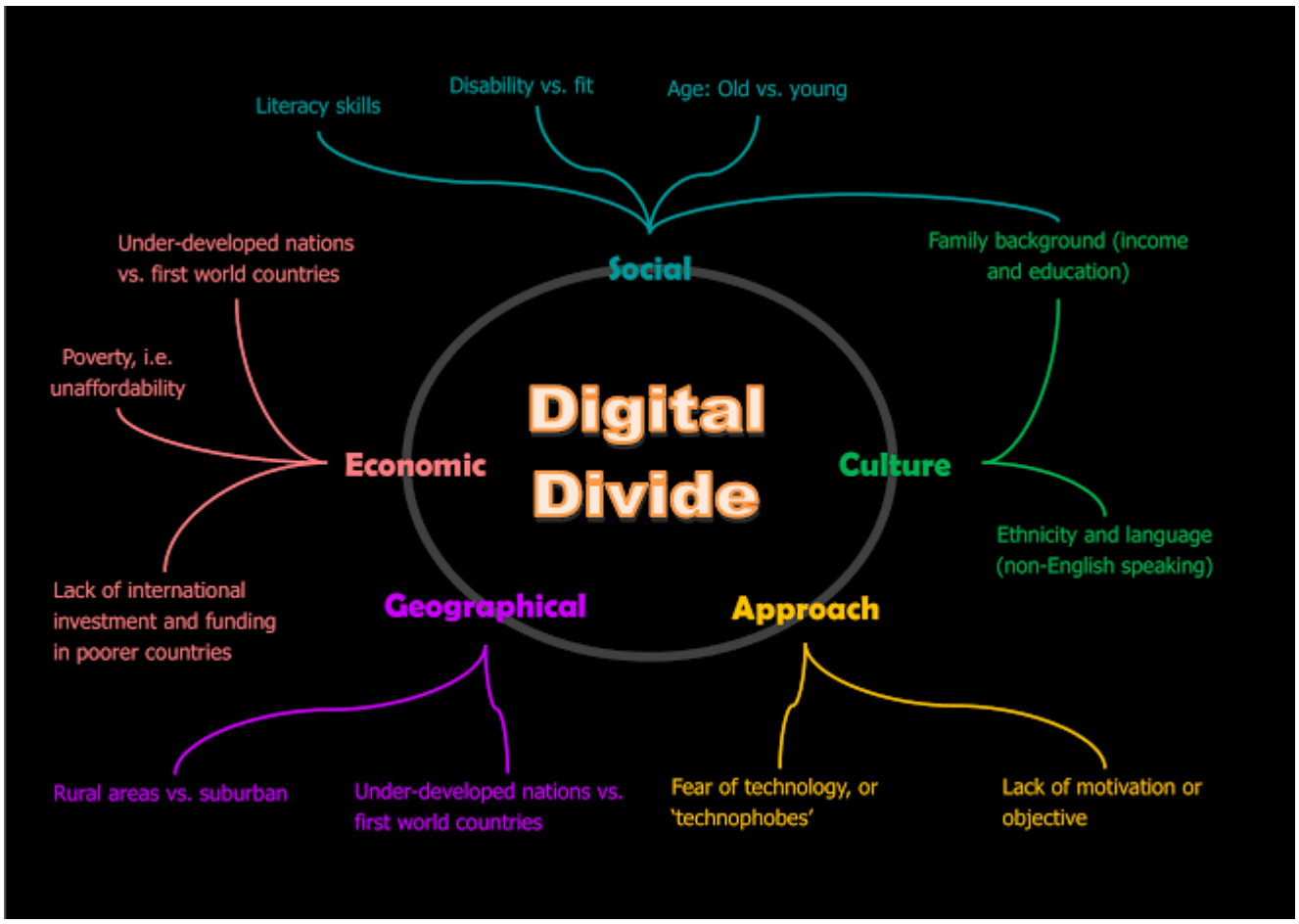
So- when we talk about an "open internet", we mean the FULL resources of the internet. Any encumberance on selected applications has ripple effects across the entire network thus jeorpadizing standardization of internet/data transmission which is essential for innovation & growth



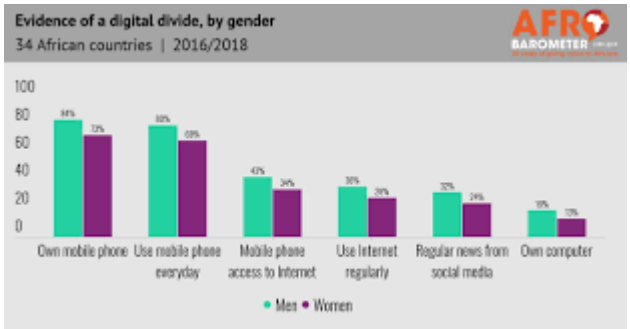
Furthermore, shutdowns hinder network interoperability (technical ability to plug/link one digital product or service into another product or service). Interoperability is the heart of the "Internet of things" eg business, devices, networks, services, e-govt, integration etc #IoT



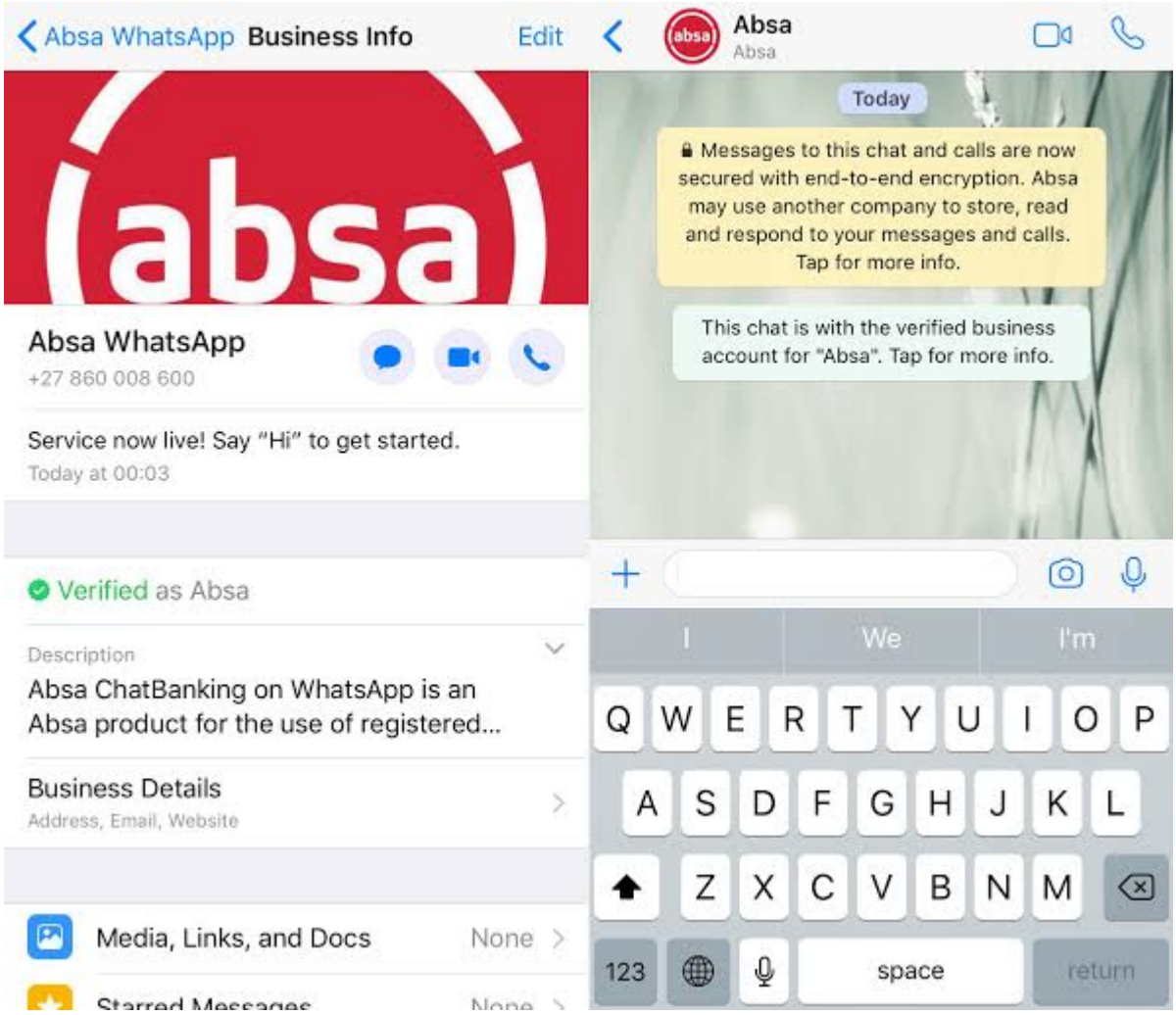
Because the internet is a global resource, shutdowns enhance a digital divide (the gap between demographics and regions that have access to modern ICTs, and those that don't or have restricted access). Ironic that 3rd world countries have the highest number of shutdowns globally.



One of the most pressing needs of our time is the digital gender gap. #Africa is continuing to leave #women behind in terms of access & affordability of digital tools & devices. The Ugandan story is not any different. Network shutdowns risk reversing even the little gains made.



Related to the above is the role of social media e.g WhatsApp banking in financial inclusion and financial services innovation. East Africa is a leading market for such use cases- an incredible opportunity to leapfrog poor brick & mortar systems & encourage micro credit & savings



In terms of social cohesion & building inclusive societies where we give everyone a chance, I am very passionate about assistive technologies. Some support groups e.g for the visually impaired are built via social media applications with #chatbot & personal assistant tools.



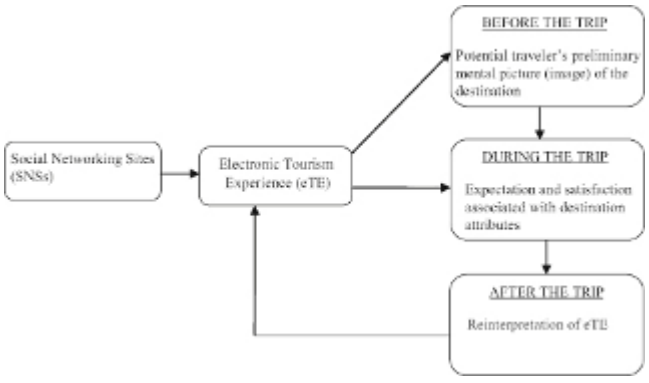
And all this Innovation & growth must be powered by a healthy population. The #COVID19 pandemic brought to the fore the need for increased support to #telehealth facilities. Online diagnosis, medical deliveries & social-media based consultations offer emergency & homecare support



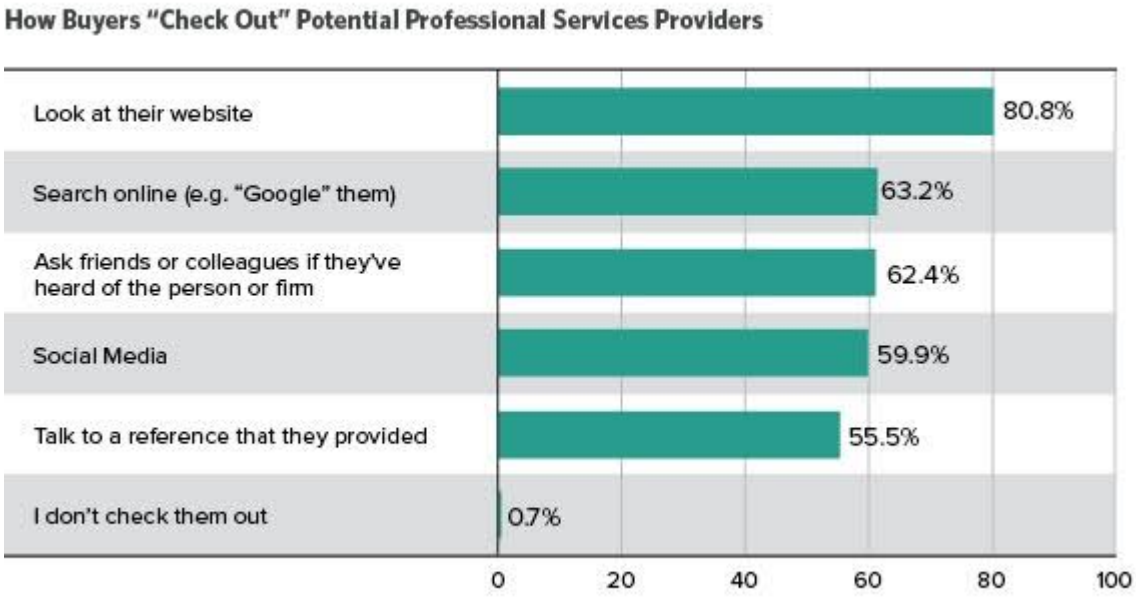
The future of work is closely interlinked with #education & skills that will unlock opportunities for the new economy. #YouTube is probably now the world's largest "university". Interactive learning & peer-to-peer systems linked to social media platforms enhance collaboration.



One of the ways the global #tourism industry is recovering from the pandemic shock is via virtual tourism. By leveraging social media tools, tour operators are able to offer tailored virtual packages e.g online tours. Shutdowns affect our global reputation and kill such pivots.



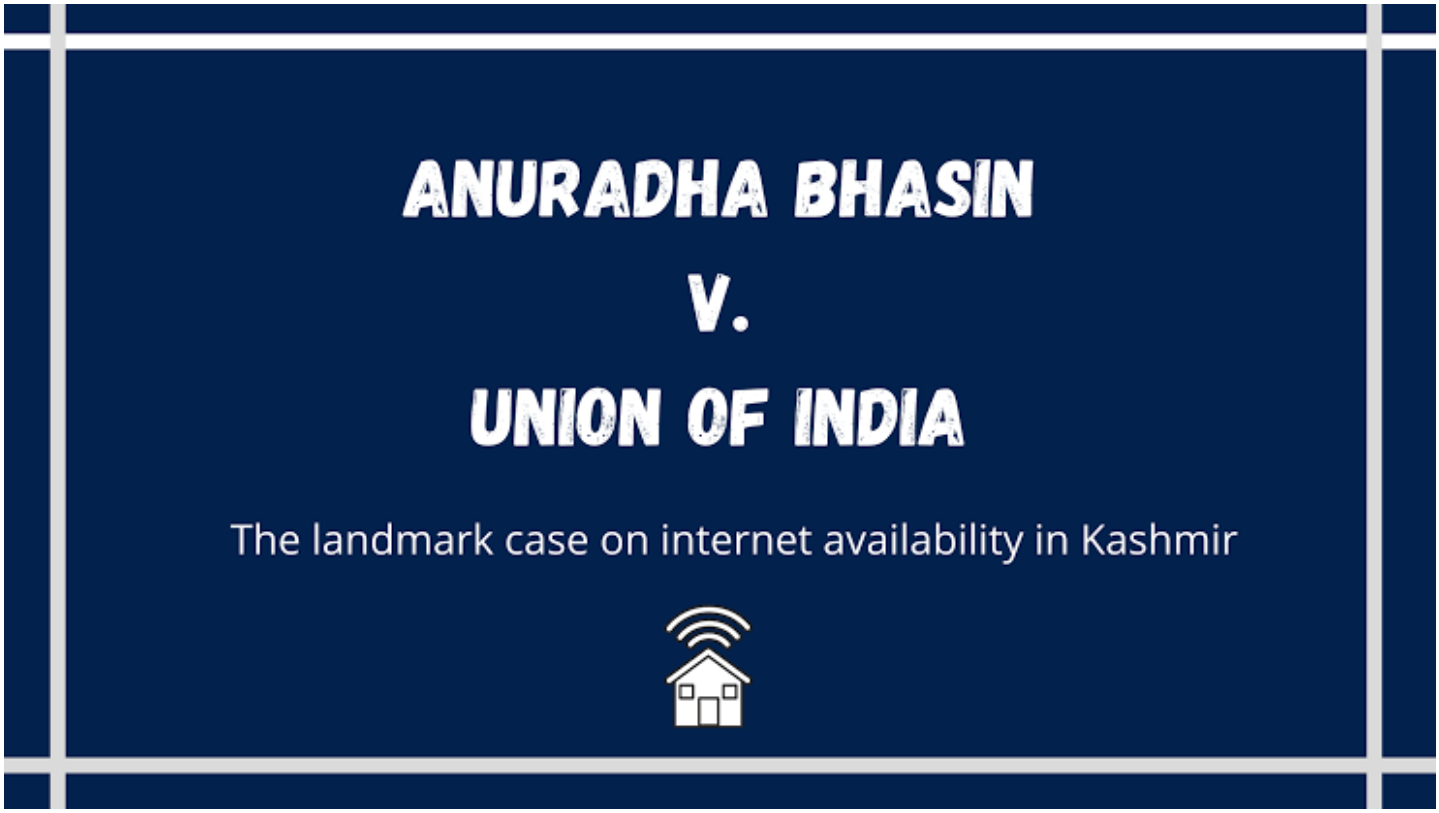
As a professional service provider, I am acutely aware of the role social media plays in business leads generation. On average, about 60% of clients check out social media profiles before engaging a service provider. Most common with the Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) market.



Now, probably the elephant in the room is the interaction between #digital rights & national security. Courts elsewhere have emphasized the "proportionality test" i.e level of reaction by govt must be proportional to the threat at hand. Legality & necessity are the yardsticks.



One of the leading legal cases on #internetshutdown is Bhasin vs Union of India (2019) where the Indian Supreme Court ruled that an order by the Indian govt to indefinitely suspend internet services in Kashmir is impermissible. Court ordered the internet services to be restored.



This multi-faceted nature of the internet & social media in our lives is what makes #KeepitOn a global movement in defence of the internet & digital rights. Leaders should not use "digital sovereignty" as an excuse to destroy the very foundation of the modern 21st century economy



*Typo on thread one. I meant "thread" not threat.

~End