

Social Media, Youth Mobilisation, and Political Involvement in Nigeria's Elections

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Abstract: This study aimed to investigate the impact social media can have in encouraging political involvement among voters throughout the campaigning phase of an election. The primary goals are to investigate the social media platforms on which voters participate in political activities and the effect that social media have on the political goals of voters. To better understand these goals, research questions were posed along these lines. The technique of the survey was utilised, and the questionnaire was the tool that was used to collect the primary data. With the assistance of three research assistants, Four hundred (400) copies of the questionnaire were distributed; 396 were returned and deemed usable. According to the study's findings, social media play a significant role in the political engagement of current-day citizens. In this regard, one of the research recommendations is that the messaging shared on social media should be properly personalised to communicate with the target audience.

Keywords: Social media, Political Participation, Electioneering, Mobilisation.

INTRODUCTION

The influence of social media may be seen in every aspect of human civilisation. People utilise social media platforms to interact and connect for various purposes, from business and politics to education and health care. Because of the interactive character of social media, it is suitable for usage in various contexts, including the search for employment, socialisation, education, entertainment, governance, and political engagement, to name just a few examples. As a result, social media, in their capacity as social communication instruments, encourage involvement, connection, the potential to spread knowledge across geographical borders, and nurturing relationships and interactions among individuals. Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, Instagram, Imo, YouTube, Telegram, and Flickr are only some of the most popular social networking platforms. Scholars in the fields of media, have highlighted the role that social networking has played in assisting social and political movements by facilitating and promoting democratic process, reinforcing social change, and bolstering government commitments.

In contrast to the realities of the modern world, Nigeria's political culture is changing from one that is passive to one that is participatory due to the rise of social media. During the elections that took place in 2011, which are largely seen as a turning point in this trend, politicians, political parties, and voters all embraced social media as a forum for participating in political discourse. These episodes, together with others such as the protest against the elimination of the gasoline subsidy, the "Bring back our daughters" movement, and the election campaign in 2015,

constitute a turning point in the use of social media in Nigerian politics. It has been brilliantly portrayed by Bosch and Mutsvairo, (2017, p.72) in their argument that people's extensive usage of social media networking sites is the consequence of their rising dispersion and popularity. These sites include Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, and Facebook.

The term "political participation" refers to the involvement of members of the general public in activities, situations, or events that impact the decisions made by elected politicians or the actions they take while in office. It refers to the numerous channels via which individuals can exercise their constitutional right to vote, communicate their political opinions, and have some influence on the workings of the political system. Consequently, each move made by a citizen to influence the resolution of a political issue is a kind of social engagement and is an indispensable component of any democracy. On the other hand, political engagement may be seen as a set of activities carried out by citizens to influence the organised policies or representatives of their respective governments. Through participation in the political process, residents may elect political representatives. These representatives can then make decisions that benefit the citizens, who will profit from social programs.

Statement of Problem

The world has seen significant change since the introduction of social media, often referred to as the new media. It is not unrelated to the fact that social media has significantly impacted the methods in which things are done and the manners in which they are conducted. The proliferation of

social media has caused people to conduct their day-to-day activities differently than they did before. Social media have made Marshall McLuhan's vision of a global village made possible by the internet and its attendant technologies a reality. McLuhan envisioned a worldwide village made possible by the internet and its attendant technologies. At this point, social media platforms such as Facebook, Youtube, Instagram, and Twitter, amongst others, have evolved into the primary conduits of expression, and they pose a serious challenge to the traditional modes of public communication. The political landscape is one of the fundamental domains that has seen a significant increase in the utilisation of social media. These days, the people and political leaders may meet in the middle because of the convergence ground that social media platforms have provided. It indicates that audience members who were previously prevented from actively participating in political activities as a result of the complex nature of mass media may now do so through the platforms provided by social media, which paves the way for immediate evaluations to be made.

It is well-established that social media avenues for communication have democratised information distribution and made it easier to communicate freely. In light of this motivation, this article aims to investigate the potential of social media in bringing people together for political engagement. There are a number of studies that examine the relationship between social media and campaigning, but there are fewer studies that investigate the impact of social media on political engagement. Because of this, the purpose of this study was to investigate how social media might impact political engagement, particularly among younger people in the run-up to the elections in 2023.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study was carried out to

- Determine the social media sites utilised by young Nigerians during elections.
- To determine the extent to which young people utilise social media during elections.
- Determine the extent to which social media influences youth political engagement.

Research Question

- What social media sites do young Nigerians utilise during elections?
- To what extent do young people utilise media during elections?
- To what extent does social media influence youths political engagement?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptual Clarification

Social Media

It is a mammoth endeavour to come to a single definition of the notion of social media, just like it is difficult to arrive at a single definition of any other topic in the social sciences. Social media are interactive technologies that may be utilised in various ways, including when users connect among themselves and share the material they make. Similarly, social media are applications and resources that enable the online exchange of information, participation, and cooperation of users. In addition, social media refers to a broad variety of Internet-based and mobile services that enable users to participate in online exchanges, contribute user-created content, or join online communities. These services are also commonly referred to as web 2.0 platforms (Research Information Network, 2011, p.7). Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube are all examples of social media, but the list is not exhaustive. The internet is the driving force behind creating a community of diverse individuals into a tight-knit group that works together to exchange information on political topics. Therefore, social media may be seen as a true instrument for bringing people together and closer to one another through the common denominator of communication and engagement among them.

Persuasion

The term "persuasion" refers to "human communication that is aimed to influence others by influencing their views, values, or attitudes," and this is the standard definition of the term (Simons, ND). The goal of the advertising theory known as persuasion theory is to bring about covert shifts in individuals' attitudes, values, and beliefs. The cognitive dissonance theory is a form of persuasion theory to cause enough discord in listeners to cause them to change their attitudes, values, beliefs, or actions. This goal can be accomplished by creating enough cognitive dissonance in listeners. On the other side, the

social judgment theory, which Muzafer Sherif and Carl Hovland developed, holds that it is simpler to persuade those who already agree with the persuader than to convince people who disagree with them. In politics, however, every candidate runs intending to come out on top. The path to success requires the backing of loyalists and the support of electorates whose preferences are still up in the air. In Ghana, for example, both parties that are now in the lead

Political Participation

Participatory politics is defined by Cohen and Kahne, (2015, page 8) as "interactive, peer-based activities through which people and organisations strive to express both voice and influence on topics of public concern." In practice, political engagement may be defined as any activity taken by ordinary persons to affect some political outcomes, namely the distribution of social goods and norms. Similarly, it refers to the participation of individuals in a society in the choice of its leaders and, either directly or indirectly, in formulating its public policy through volunteer activities. According to another school of thought, citizens and their efforts to influence political processes are seen as the primary focus of political engagement. A citizen or an individual's level of political engagement determines whether or not they have an immediate or indirect impact on the political system. The term "political participation" refers to a wide range of activities, ranging from the "traditional" involvement seen in election processes to the "unconventional" involvement seen in rallies, protests, and other types of movements.

Democracy and Participatory Politics

The term "democracy" refers to a form of governance in which the supreme authority is placed in the people and is either directly or indirectly exercised by those people via various forms of representation. In broad strokes, democracy may be defined as a form of government exercised by the people and for the people. A democratic system needs to be comprised of the following four primary components:

A method for choosing and changing the government through elections that are both free and fair; The active engagement of the people, in their capacity as citizens, in politics and other aspects of civic life; The protection of the human

rights of all citizens; and A system of justice in which all citizens are subject to the same legal requirements and administrative processes.

Communication is a very important component of democratic administration. As a result, political communication serves an important function for democracies. During the early stages of democratic development, the idea of political communication came into existence. The word "rhetoric" refers to a method of political communication unintentionally employed by the Greek democracy to engage with its citizenry. This theory has been advanced by several academics (Asante, 2020).

Political rhetoric was widely used in the ancient Greek city of Athens. It was a skill that political stakeholders mastered, and it had a significant impact on the results of political campaigns as well as the mobilisation of the population. The advertising and persuasion paradigm is utilised in the process of political communication. Politicians are required to make the people aware of the purpose, vision, objectives, and plans they have for them. They also convince the people to vote for them by making themselves appear convincing regarding their beliefs, conduct, and the content of their speeches.

Yunis, (2018) contends that because it was the politician's role to provide the residents of his country with reasoned counsel that would suit their interests, the politician was accountable to the audience for the content of the message he delivered. When a politician could gain support for his programs, and the policies could achieve their goals, it was likely that the politician would be rewarded.

Since its origin in ancient Greece, the media has been an important factor in the development of political communication for many years. In Greek culture, aspirants to political office were required to state in front of an Assembly. These speakers were a reflection of modern-day political candidates. The members of the society served as listeners for the mode of communication that took place here, which was direct.

For a democratic government to occur, all political parties and interests must be actively involved. It guarantees that the many perspectives of the individuals are considered to aid the formulation of sound decisions. The political system that was in place in Athens, Greece, is an excellent illustration

of participatory democracy. The voters are asked to attend a meeting where each prospective candidate will address them before a choice is made over who will take the helm of the organisation.

At present, this practice has developed into political campaigning, in which politicians communicate their goals to voters through participating in rallies, debates, and other forms of political programming. Before the proliferation of digital technology and the internet, most communication regarding political campaigns that took place through the media was a monologue. The political parties broadcast their content and what they wanted the voter to know, but the parties were unaware of the electorate's stance on the parties' respective points of view. The notion of democracy has been strengthened by the proliferation of social media, which enables ordinary people to take an active role in political campaigns and debates at the touch of a button on their smartphones. In contrast to newspapers, radio, and television, social media provides the population with a direct channel through which they may engage in government. The dialogic aspect of democracy has been articulated and placed into perspective thanks to the rise of digital media. These days, many candidates maintain active social media accounts and routinely post campaign-related content to them. The electorate and the general public have the opportunity to connect with candidates through the use of likes, shares, and comments on the candidates' posts.

Additionally, social media platforms make it easier for users to get news and political material, enabling them to openly express their agreement or disagreement with particular viewpoints by publishing and commenting on that content. It may require nothing more than a single click to accomplish in terms of the likes and shares feature on Facebook or the retweet function on Twitter. On the other hand, groups and peers may also distribute calls for people to participate in protests, petitions, or additional activities related to a campaign.

Social Media and Agenda Setting

The media play a significant part in determining what should be on the agenda. The idea of agenda setting in mass communication seeks to explain how the audience that a certain medium of mass communication is aimed at responding to interacts

with and is affected by that medium. The idea that the major interface between the general people and the reality that surrounds them is formed by the mass media is the fundamental tenet of this philosophy. In the days of more conventional forms of media, the media were the only ones who could determine the agenda. Nevertheless, in this day and age of digital technology, all political players can also determine the agenda. The theory of agenda setting postulated that the media could sway the outcome of an election by giving one candidate preferential treatment, such as by tripling the volume of coverage about him (coverage bias), painting his candidate in a consistently negative light (statement bias), or not reporting key events involving his opposition. Coverage bias is a form of coverage bias. Statement bias is a form of statement bias (gatekeeping bias). This hypothesis transforms whenever it comes into contact with social media. As a result of political parties producing their material and interacting directly with the general public, these parties enjoy the benefit of being able to influence the agenda to some extent and increase their exposure.

Social Media and Political Participation

The spread of democracy across Africa over the past three decades has caused significant shifts in the operational procedures of government. The media has risen to prominence on the African continent due to its role in democratic systems. The proliferation of new media technologies has fundamentally altered how people communicate, making it less indirect, more immediate, and more complicated while simultaneously condensing space and increasing availability. Social media is a communication platform that enables users to exchange information and content with many people. This definition describes what social media is. Alternately, social media platforms can be defined as web-based systems that allow individuals to create a public or semipublic profile within a constrained system, establish a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and read and traverse their list of connections as well as those made by others within the system. This definition of social media platforms is more commonly used today.

The number of people using and being familiar with the internet in Africa is constantly growing. In 2010, just 10% of the people living on the African continent had access to the internet. On the

other hand, by 2015, one individual out of every five had access to the internet. ICT Facts & Figures - The World in 2015 was published by the International Telecommunications Union in 2015. Downloading and utilising social media platforms like Facebook, WhatsApp, YouTube, Instagram, and Twitter is becoming increasingly popular in Africa. According to BBC Afrique, (2015), "Facebook oeuvre un bureau en Afrique," Facebook has 120 million active users in Africa as of June 2015, with more than 80 percent of those users accessing the site via mobile devices.

The spread of democracy across Africa over the past three decades has affected the functioning of the governance system. The significance of the media to the functioning of democracy has contributed to the rise of its profile across the African continent. The development of new technologies in the media has resulted in a revolution in the communication process, making it less indirect, more immediate, and more complicated, in addition to the additional advantage of making the globe smaller while simultaneously increasing access (Rahul, 2017). One way to define social media is as a communication platform that allows users to share information and content with many people. It is also possible to describe social media platforms as web-based services that enable users to create public or semipublic profiles within a bounded system, articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and view and navigate both their list of connections and the connections made by others within the system. Because of these advantages, social media is an excellent platform for conversing with others.

The number of patrons and people using the internet in Africa is expanding at a consistent rate. It was stated that just 10 percent of the people in Africa had access to the internet in 2010. However, by 2015, that number has increased to one in every five people having access to an internet connection. (International Telecommunications Union, 2015, ICT Facts and Figures - The World in 2015) There is a direct correlation between the growing number of individuals accessing the internet in Africa and their eagerness to download and use various social media platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, YouTube, Instagram, and Twitter. For instance, in June of 2015, Facebook said that it had 120 million active users across Africa, of which more

than 80 percent were accessing the site using mobile devices (BBC Afrique, 2015, 'Facebook oeuvre un bureau en Afrique').

Adeizaresearched democracy and the role that social media played in the election for governor of Ekiti state, which is located in the federal republic of Nigeria. According to him, that election offered an intriguing opportunity to investigate the relationship between politics and politicians' use of digital media. He made this claim in one of his statements. 'According to the first data, the victor of the election was able to leverage digital media to his benefit while simultaneously portraying them as exclusive resources. During the election, each contender utilised and uniquely presented digital media. (Asante, 2020).

METHODOLOGY

The researchers employed the use of a survey as their technique of study. According to Asemah, Gujbawu, Ekharefo, and Okpanchi, (2017), a survey is a type of research design intended to collect large and small samples from a population to investigate the distribution, incidence, and interaction of educational activities such as sociological and psychological variables. This type of research design aims to collect large and small samples from a population to examine the distribution, incidence, and interaction of educational activities. In the field of behavioural sciences, surveying is the primary technique of data collecting since it is often regarded as the approach that is the most appropriate. All people who now live in the Etsako West Local Government Area of Edo State are included in this study's population. It is anticipated that there will be 260,700 people living in Etsako West Local Government in 2018. The researcher took this population and utilised the Taro Yamani sample size to find the appropriate sample size, which came to be 400.

When selecting the sample for this investigation, the multi-stage sampling approach was used as the method of choice. When a researcher determines that the complexity of a population can make it difficult to produce a sample representative of the community, then they need to use this approach. Because of the complexities of the Etsako West Local Government Area, the researcher partitioned the local government into four different kingdoms. These kingdoms are Auchu, Uzairue, South-Ibie, and Aviele. The researcher chose two communities

at random from each of the four kingdoms, for a total of eight communities from which to choose. Communities from Auchi (Usogun and Akpekpe), Uzairue (Jattu and Iyamho), South-Ibie (Sabo and Iyakpi), and Aviele were chosen to represent each of the kingdoms (Ubiane and Idegun). The questionnaire was given out in eight different towns, with fifty (50) individuals responding to it. The researchers filled out fifty (50) copies of the questionnaire. The fifty individuals were chosen deliberately based on their openness to responding

to the questionnaire. The acquired information was analysed by employing a straightforward percentage approach.

Analysis and Interpretation of Data

Four hundred copies of the questionnaire were delivered to respondents; 396 copies were filled out and returned, which is a response rate of 99 percent. The gathered information is organised into frequency tables and assessed with the help of fundamental percentages.

Table 1: Respondents' Knowledge of Information and communication technologies

Response	Percentage
Yes	89%
No	9%
Not Sure	2%
Total	100% (N = 396)

According to the information in table one; more than two-thirds of respondents (89 percent) have a good understanding of social media. As a

consequence of this, the findings show that a greater proportion of respondents have an understanding of what social media is.

Table 2: Respondents' Exposure to Various Forms of Information and Communication Technologies

Forms of Social Media	Percentage
Facebook	37%
Twitter	17%
YouTube	5%
Myspace	4%
Podcasts	3%
SMS (Text messages)	28%
Snapchat, Instagram, LinkedIn.	6%
Total	100% (N = 396)

The multiple social media outlets that respondents utilised are outlined in Table 2 below. The figures in the table indicate that the majority of respondents make use of Facebook. It is because

respondents stated that they use Facebook at a rate of 37%. It shows that voters used Facebook significantly to participate in political processes actively.

Table 3: The Most Frequently Used Social Media Platform

Media	Percentage
Facebook	68%
Twitter	9%
GSM skype calls/texts	20%
Others	3%
Total	100% (N = 396)

The information gathered in table three pertains to the respondents' use of various social media platforms to participate in political activities. According to the currently available figures, 68 percent of respondents preferred using Facebook

as a platform for political activity. It can be deduced from this that Facebook, as a social medium, enjoys a great deal of popularity among users and, as a result, functions effectively as a device for political engagement.

Table 4: Extent of Respondents' Use of Preferred Social Media Platforms

Media	Percentage
To a Great Extent	68%
To an Extent	9%
To a little extent	20%
No Extent	3%
Total	100% (N = 396)

The results of this survey are presented in table four, which shows the extent to which respondents utilised their preferred social media platforms to search for information throughout the campaigns for the 2023 primary elections. According to the data presented in the table, the vast majority of respondents (68 percent) disclosed that they relied heavily on social media to acquire information on election participation.

Table 5: Frequency of Getting Campaign Messages on 2023 Primary Election on Social Media

Media	Percentage
Very Frequent	68%
Often	9%
Not Often	20%
Undecided	3%
Total	100% (N = 396)

The results of this survey are presented in Table 5, which shows the frequency with which respondents received campaign messages on social media linked to the primary elections in 2023. According to the data, respondents were provided

with information regularly. It is because 68 percent of those who participated in the survey stated that social media is their primary source for information on party primaries in 2023.

Table 6: Information Gotten on Social Media Influenced Electorates Political Decisions

Media	Percentage
Strongly agreed	68%
Agreed	9%
Disagreed	20%
Strongly Disagreed	3%
Undecided	0
Total	100% (N = 396)

Table six shows respondents' views on the information they were exposed to during the electioneering. The data showed that 68% of the respondents were influenced by the campaign messages they got through social media. It means that the campaign messages had a great influence on the respondents.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This study's objective was to evaluate the use of social media for political mobilisation to increase participants' participation in the political process. Several questions were posed to ascertain the level of participation in social media and the potential implications of such participation for voters.

The purpose of this study was to investigate. The first question of the research was intended to determine which social media networks the respondents utilise. According to the findings, users extensively used various social media platforms to convey information to the general public. For instance, the data in Table 2 demonstrated that 37 percent of respondents have a Facebook account. It lends credence to the notion that Facebook was a well-liked social site among voters. As of 2018, Facebook had more than two billion users worldwide. It is also consistent with the findings of Warren, (2009), who found that college students who participated in political

activities on Facebook felt more motivated to vote in the 2008 presidential election, and those who had Facebook accounts felt more affiliated with the candidates due to the presence of the candidates and the information they received on Facebook. It is also consistent with the findings of Warren, (2009), who found that college students who participated in political activities on Facebook felt more motivated to vote in the 2008 presidential election. The proliferation of new media technologies has fundamentally altered how people communicate, making it less indirect, more immediate, and more complicated while simultaneously condensing space and increasing availability. Social media is a communication platform that enables users to exchange information and content with many people. This definition describes what social media is. Alternately, social media platforms can be defined as web-based systems that allow individuals to create a public or semipublic profile within a constrained system, establish a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and read and traverse their list of connections as well as those made by others within the system. This definition of social media platforms is more commonly used today.

The frequency with which respondents were exposed to social media communications during campaigning was also measured as part of this research project. According to the findings, respondents were continuously exposed to various forms of social media. It demonstrates that audiences obtain political messaging relevant to the electioneering process through social media, which is an essential and fundamental component of this process.

The respondents were almost unanimous in their agreement that the use of social media affected the degree to which they participated in political activities. For instance, the data presented in table six shows that 68 percent of respondents were swayed by campaign material obtained through social media. It appears that the campaign messaging had a considerable influence on the political involvement of the respondents.

It may be because the data in table two revealed that respondents were often exposed to political campaign messages on social media. It would explain why they responded the way they did. It demonstrates that the postulation of the agenda

setting theory, which is the foundation of this research, is correct. According to the agenda-setting hypothesis, consistent exposure to the messages sent by the media can impact what is promoted or preached by the media. The agenda-setting theory led this study, and our work was the foundation for that theory. The media play a significant part in determining what should be on the agenda. The idea of agenda setting in mass communication seeks to explain how the audience that a certain medium of mass communication is aimed at the response to interacts with and is affected by that medium. The idea that the major interface between the general people and the reality that surrounds them is formed by the mass media is the fundamental tenet of this philosophy. In the days of more conventional forms of media, the media were the only ones who could determine the agenda.

Nevertheless, in this day and age of digital technology, all political players can also determine the agenda. The theory of agenda setting postulated that the media could sway the outcome of an election by giving one candidate preferential treatment, such as by tripling the volume of coverage about him (coverage bias), painting his candidate in a consistently negative light (statement bias), or not reporting key events involving his opposition. Coverage bias is a form of coverage bias. Statement bias is a form of statement bias (gatekeeping bias). This hypothesis transforms whenever it comes into contact with social media. As a result of political parties producing their material and interacting directly with the general public, these parties enjoy the benefit of being able to influence the agenda to some extent and increase their exposure.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The findings of this study led the researchers to conclude that social media platforms offer a good opportunity for political campaigns throughout the electioneering process. They are tremendously powerful tools that, when applied appropriately, have the potential to motivate people to get involved in politics. It is not unconnected to the fact that this study revealed that social media offers an interactive platform between voters and possible leaders. Both of these things are tied to one another. This scenario was virtually unimaginable before the proliferation of social media sites like Facebook and Twitter.

The use of social media as a communication channel is one that the research suggests should be encouraged for the reasons stated above. In addition, the messaging used on social media needs to be successfully personalised to target the desired audience. Meanwhile, given the precarious situation of the nation's power supply and the exorbitant cost of gaining access to the internet, the government should move swiftly to ensure that both electricity and internet access are subsidised at extremely low prices.

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