Influence of Social Media on Political Mobilisation: Lessons from 2023 Presidential Election in Nigeria

[1]**Onyeka Uwakwe,**
[2]**Benjamin K. Obioha,**
[3]**Igwegbe Joy Oyibo,**
[4]**Martins C. Njaka,**
[5]**Osi Moses Makwe &**
[6]**Emmauel Okika**

[1,2,3,45&6]*Department of Mass Communication, Federal Polytechnic, Oko, Anambra State, Nigeria*

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Corresponding Author:
Onyeka Uwakwe

Abstract

The Internet has become one of the most important technological developments on the planet. Humanity depends on it for benefits in social, cultural, political, and other realms. In the space of more than a decade, the Internet has Nigeria has witnessed tremendous Internet revolutions affecting the people in diverge ways. Thus, in the Digital Age, the methods by which specific contents are selected and articulated into news have changed. So also, are the media by which people receive news. These days, crave for *real-time information* is on the rise. And to satisfy this thirst, many people turn to online sources and social media sites such as Facebook and WhatsApp to stay up to date with the news. Professionals now talk about citizen journalism and electronic republic! Currently, Nigeria is in the news, courtesy of 2023 general elections. This is paper, outcome of survey, set out on a survey on based on as sample of 484 derived from Awka metropolis of Anambra State. The paper submits that these days, crave for *real-time information* is on the rise. And to satisfy this thirst, many people turn to online sources and social media sites such as Facebook and WhatsApp to stay up to date with the news. Given the 2023 election scenario in Nigeria, the paper concludes that new media are potent tools of information dissemination and mass mobilization. Apart from adding to literature, this paper has significance in terms of development and political communication in Nigeria.

Background to the Study

At a time in Nigeria, people could only get the news when they flipped pages of newspapers or sit through a broadcast announcer's presentation of the day's events (Uwakwe, 2018). Those days are gone, courtesy of the Internet and other technological developments in the domain of the new media. The world over, many social media users can now share their stories first on their pages, before mainstream journalists could hook up on the news. Sometimes, in the quest to keep the pace with social media, the mainstream media erroneously hook on fake news first shared citizen journalists driven by the profit's motives or other intentions (Uwakwe, 2018).

New Information and Communication Technologies (NICTs) have led phenomenal innovations in every sphere of human endeavour. And the media appear to be the major beneficiary of this revolutionary trend. Thus, scholars discuss new media in a variety of ways and in the process adding to a growing tremendously literature. Today, breaking the news is no longer the prerogative of the mainstream media. However, social media have monumentally changed the way news is produced and received. Consequently, deciding a big story and saying it first is also performed by citizen journalists or netizens. Indeed, due to this media revolution, the power to inform and break the news is no longer the exclusive rights of the traditional journalist trained in classrooms to do so (Uwakwe, 2017b).

Social media have altered the concept of *breaking news*. An eyewitness account on Facebook can become an instant hit as well as a source of story for the mainstream media. Anyone can break the news from a Facebook account, or any other social media with far-reaching implications. In Nigeria, some governors such as Prof. Soludo of Anambra State release latest information on Facebook. This is indicative of the powers of social media. These days, crave for *real-time information* is on the rise. To satisfy this thirst, many people turn to social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter and WatsApp to stay up-to-date with the news.

In Nigeria, Facebook, TikTok and WattsApp are popular. Twitter is apparently elitist while some sites like Telegram try catching up. Some others are unknown to most Nigerians. There are several examples to buttress the emerging powers of social media to break the news as well as being popular means of information sharing. News of the death of Michael Jackson in 2009 first broke on social media before any major news networks. *TMZ.com,* the American entertainment website, released the story first. It took about two hours before it was confirmed by the LA Times and Associated Press.

Social Media Use in Nigeria

In the 21ˢᵗ Century, power to disseminate information is no longer the exclusive rights of government through state sponsored broadcast media. The equation has changed in favour of the masses. The masses have been celebrating this power and sometimes causing positive changes. This is power to the people! Prior to the Internet revolution in Nigeria, people could only get the news when they flipped pages of newspapers or sit through a broadcast announcer's presentation of the day's events. In those days also, very

few people could afford the luxury of purchasing a standard colour TV as well as buying daily newspapers or magazines.

Given the tremendous rise in user count of social media –especially Facebook and Whatsapp– in Nigeria, there has been a fundamental change in the management of political and social information. The equation on power to reach the public has changed in favour of the public. This scenario was unthinkable during the Second Republic Nigeria, 1979-1983. On this basis, communication and political discourses have to change in line with evolving media technological landscape. The paper analyses the role of the media in evolving a more ethical and productive political process in Nigeria.

In Nigeria, with a cell phone of less than 10,000 naira and active Internet network data bundle, you can sign into the Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter and similar social media. If your data bundle is adequate and the network is friendly, you can remain online as a king and navigate 24/7! As an online king, you have the ability to hunt and peddle information all as you wish. In Nigeria, some have become popular information peddlers (Uwakwe, 2017b). Indeed, apart from biting recession, intractable security challenges and community skirmishes, life is a bit worth it with regard to growing communication interface among Nigerians. Why not, Nigeria was once adjudged the happiest people in the world! Even an *okada* man is having a swell time with at least a *tokunbo* phone, or a low-quality handset from China (Uwakwe, 2017b).

Even though these low-quality phones cannot be used anywhere in Europe and America, these affordable handsets have created opportunities for media access and the phenomenal rise in Internet use in Nigeria. In any case, irrespective of the poor per capita income, Media dependence in favour of the new media is on the rise. Several factors account for this phenomenon and this leads to questions on user gratifications –why people use the media. In the last general elections, many Nigerians used social media as sources of information.

The Internet is a primary agitator of media change. In any case, the Internet has accelerated digital convergence with a range of players: newspapers, magazines, radio, television, film, books. This convergence has led to the evolution of *mixed media.* On Thursday August 30, 2018, for instance, Senate President, Abubakar Bukola Saraki, declared his presidential ambition under the platform of opposition Peoples Democratic Party, PDP. Senator Saraki made his ambition public at a dialogue with youth and young aspirants held at Sheraton Hotel under the auspices of the "Not Too Young to Run" movement and in the presence of the PDP National Chairman, Prince Uche Secondus in Abuja**.** The announcement made news instantly and was promptly shared by Nigerians in social media. During the Second Republic, the State media might choose to keep the news away from the public. On July 13, 2015, information on the sacking of Service Chiefs in Nigeria was relayed through subscribing cell phones in Nigeria via the Guardian daily mobile news which costs thirty naira weekly. The information delivered through MTN platform: "President Buhari has sacked the Head of Army, Navy and Air force" (credited

to http://wwngrguardiannews.com). This information was within minutes retransmitted through the social media.

During the 2023 General Elections in Nigeria, many people learnt about elections happenings in various places in real time from social. This is not to discountenance the fact that some mainstream outfits such as Arise TV, AIT and Channels TV relayed election processes live. Shortly after inauguration on May 29, 2023, President Bola Ahmed Tinubu appointed Kunle Adeleke as the President's Chief of Protocol as well as Dele Alake, former Commissioner of Information and Strategy in Lagos as his official spokesperson. Many Nigerians received this information via social media. Also, On June 19, 2023, information that President Tinubu has retired all Service Chiefs, Advisers, Comptroller General of Customs and appointment of new ones is considered to have been widely circulated in various social media ahead of the mainstream media.

Statement of the Problem
Presidential and National Assembly elections held on Saturday, February 25, 2023 in Nigeria. Elections for 28 of the 36 governorships and State House of Assembly also held the following Saturday, March 11. On May 29, 2023, Nigeria will witness 24 years of uninterrupted democracy — the longest span in Nigeria's history. President Muhammadu Buhari has served two mandates and was ineligible to seek another four-year term. The first three candidates were top as announced by the electoral body.
　　i.　Bola Tinubu contested under incumbent All Progressives Congress (APC). Tinubu, now President, was Governor of Lagos State (1999- 2007).
　　ii.　Abubakar Abubarkar, second in the election, contested under People's Democratic Party, PDP. He was Vice-President to President Olusegun Obasanjo.
　　iii.　Peter Obi, third as announced, is of the Labour Party of Nigeria (LP). He is a businessman and former Governor of Anambra State. Mr Peter Obi has energized young Nigerians at home and in the diaspora and believed to have appealed to Nigerians who want change.

Arising from the above, the major issue which this study set out to resolve is how social media influenced the 2023 Presidential Election in Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study
　　1.　To determine how people rely on different media for information on political issues.
　　2.　To determine social media was mostly deployed by voters as channel of political communication.
　　3.　To determine social media mostly used by politicians as channel of political communication.
　　4.　To determine the impact of social media as platform for political action.

Research Questions
　　1.　To what extent do people rely on different media for information on political issues?

2. Which social media was mostly deployed by voters as channel of political communication?
3. Which social media was mostly deployed by politicians as channel of political communication?
4. What is the impact of social media as platform for political action?

Literature Review
Media Role in Development Process

Literature is replete with the notion that the media can add to the flow of public of information and increase quantity and quality of knowledge. Arising from this, Third-World countries often attach much importance to the role of mass media in national development. In fact, there is a basic postulation that the media can create awareness, exert influence on opinion and induce change. This is largely because the media can penetrate into the life of the people through their day-to-day reporting. According to Rodman (2006, p.469), "conventional wisdom continues to see the media as having direct and powerful effects." In scholarly circles and on the field, professionals keep focusing on effective ways of reaching the people for varying purposes. The relevance of political awareness to the emergence of functional societies has been an old paradigm and continues to be dominant. Over the decades, political awareness has often been linked to political participation and both concepts are adjudged essential in the growth of democracy in any society. The media is adjudged one of the most effective vehicles of political socialization.

Primary scholarly works indicated optimism on the impact of media on awareness creation. Schramm (1964) observed that the mass media can contribute substantially to the amount and kinds of information available to the people of a developing country. The author asserted that that (1) they can widen horizons and thus help to build empathy (2) they can focus attention on problems and goals of development and (3) they can raise personal and national aspirations and all these they can do largely themselves and directly. Habte (1983, p.100) observed that:

> News and information media are viewed as essential intermediaries between policy decision makers and the public by mobilizing masses to accept new ideas and modern techniques without creating cultural and ethnic tensions and psychological frustrations and anxieties. The dynamics of modernization are complex and require multidimensional approaches… hence, a critical task of mass media is the establishment of a sound and stable political framework in which a proper and congenial social environment is created that in turn promotes the expansion of other sectors of national development.

Habte emphasized that "information media can mobilize the fragment interest of the masses into a single national goal" by reducing "the problems of changing the attitudes and behaviour of others and of communication across the barrier of differing culture (Pye 1963). Schramm (1964) provided a good platform for the description of mass media functions developing countries:

To bring the people of the developing nations into decision of development, to give them basics for participating effectively, to speed and smooth the change decided upon… it is not entirely an impersonal, inflexible process. If the flow of communication will permit, the people can have a great deal to do with setting goals and deciding when and how they should change and what they want their society to change to.

In the same view, Pool (1963, 253) expressed the belief, that "mass communication could contribute to the unity of newly developing nation by focusing attention on salient problems and facilitating the ensuring discussion and debates on national level." He stated that the mass broadens the relevant reference groups in discussion. Studies indicate that media consumption promotes political engagement and that mews use influences political engagement by increasing political knowledge while guiding citizens' attitudes and judgments (Eveland & Scheufele, 2000; McLeod et al., 1996; McLeod, Scheufele, & Moy, 1999; Thorson, Swafford, & Kim, 2017). Research outcomes have equally demonstrated that consumption of online news (including through social media) promotes participation in political activities (Chan, Chen, & Lee, 2017; de Zuniga, Molyneux, & Zheng, 2014).

The mass media have always played important role in promoting modernisation and development to people as well as articulating the views of the common man. On several occasions, the Nigerian media have been called in to fulfil social obligations, help promote good governance and protect democracy. News performs a variety of functions and modern democracies cannot function without news. It tells a community or a society about itself, providing information on places, events, developments, weather, danger and progress. The media tell us about elections, contestants and sports scores. Very important, the media mirror the performance of public officials. This they do by constantly appraising the activities of public officials. The mass media have always played important roles in promoting modernisation and development to people as well as articulating the views of the common man. On several occasions, the Nigerian media have been called in to fulfill social obligations, help promote good governance and protect democracy. The 20th Century innovation of the late 90s was, the Internet created new media outlook with resulting in greater window of media opportunities. The technology created possibility for the instant transmission of information from among the publics. Before the Internet revolution, only the mainstream media could exercise this power (Uwakwe, 2017). Some scholars already began to foresee the advantages that it would pose for political forums and policy making.

Reasons for the Rise of Netizens in Nigeria
Liberalisation of the industry
A technology was to help change the entire news landscape in Nigeria– the GSM. The Global System for Mobile Communication (GSM) launched in Nigeria in 2001 is the precursor to modern day information and communication revolution in Nigeria. Thanks to the innovative decision of General Olusegun Obasanjo, President of Nigeria at that

time. The GSM brought internet connectivity to the door-steps of many Nigerians. In the past, only the rich with good finances for broadband accessories could afford Internet connectivity from Israel, Europe and others. That was before 2001. Today, in the area of long-distance communications, dial to reach a local relative, as well as the international neighbour is also most one touch (Uwakwe, 2017).

Rise in Tech Literacy

The increase in more technologically literate Nigerians contributed to the emergence of online journalists and social media enforcers have broadened the landscape for political discourses. Somehow, netizens, the fore bearers of this Internet-based journalism as phenomenon now supervening the traditional media. Currently, it is possible for ordinary individuals to publish anything. And the reach is worldwide. Consequently, this has triggered an argument on whether journalism is, or has come to be a profession manned by trained people who have regard for ethics. Indeed, how can somebody without training freely manage a new site and post information on the Internet for public consumption? This "free to air" publishing style has been enhanced by the system which make it possible to publish anything almost at no fee. Publishing in the past was big business–and it is still–which required large investments. Such investments were managed by big business moguls. Many scarcely rich people who ventured into the business had their tales of misfortunes to narrate in Nigeria. Now, all you need to be a petty publisher who still can reach a worldwide audience surpassing your local newspaper is a computer and Internet connection. To ensure that you meet your dreams to publish, many organizations now offer free server space for web publishing. They can host your personal web site free with a motive of attracting advertisements to their sites.

We have seen that journalism is experiencing a renaissance. We are aware of "open-source journalism," or "citizen journalism," which describes a process by which citizens, the ordinary, acting as amateur journalists without pay, submit information to Web sites such as YouTube and Facebook. In addition, social activists have developed robust literature in the social media, and this is where they have exercised their powers! If you were an eyewitness, you can as well act as a photojournalist and upload your pictures of Nyanya blast! In Nigeria, free media is thriving, and the use of social media is growing. All you need to be an activist on the net is to have a simple compliant smart phone, or a computer and a modem with a valid bundle. Once you log on, and network is all right, you are in control and can remain there as king (Uwakwe, 2017b).

Increase in Political Literacy

The booming citizens in Nigeria have become an integral part of Nigeria's media ecology. Consequently, citizen journalists as well as other online practitioners participate in the articulation and circulation of transformative and politically consequential national discourses. In 2022, the, End Sars movement was instigation in social media resulting in momentous social changes.

Decline of Adversarial Mainstream Media

The first is the perception of the public in the failure of the mainstream media to continue to execute the onerous Fourth Estate task assigned to it by society. The view of the traditional media as lap was to do a fatal blow on the integrity og the media enjoyed by the likes of Ray Ekpu and Dan Agbese in the 1980s. Recall that the media is hailed to have been the flag bearer in the war against military, resulting to hand over of power to civilians in 1999.

Arrival of Web 2.0.

The coming of web 2.0 offered the public interactive opportunities in media interface. People could read and comment on stories. This provided wonderful media gratifications, making the news media a good bride. Traditional media in Nigeria were slow in adopting this innovation.

Proliferation of Android or Smart Phones

We can hardly complete this paper without mentioning the gadget at the centre stage of action– the cell phone. The unique features of many modern cell phones endear them to users. Irrespective of poor PCI, the ordinary Nigerian wants to remain connected to a GSM network to the extent that even *okada* (commercial motorcyclists) riders charge their phones on their motorcycles while on duty. The Internet use is boundless and is highly entrenched among school children, undergraduates and average Nigerian. It is a limitless world.

Today, people use cell phones to be active members of the social community in following ways:

1. Basically, people use cell phones to communicate and interact in a shrinking world, thus becoming active members on small communities.
2. Getting news bits and details from news media and getting further insights and recommendation from Facebook and other social media.
3. Users generate a variety of contents- videos, photos (with the aid of inbuilt cameras) thereby creating their own content of eyewitness accounts.
4. In built cameras also enable users to produce their own home movies for sharing among social friends and family members.
5. Users generate rising volume of texts and other graphics for sharing.
6. You can perform a variety of tasks such as editing pictures and words.
7. Smart phones provide entertainments such as games.
8. Smart phones serve as data base. Users can store a lot of data on them and can be relied on for research purposes.

Rise in Internet Penetration

Despite the poor economic and political situation, more and more Nigerians are connecting to the Internet. Much of the Internet connectivity among students, below- the-ladder and the middle class is via the use of cheap Internet compliant cell phones. An extraction has access through the computer and a modem. Currently, some private

schools, religious organizations, corporate organizations, small scale industries, NGOs and most government central establishments are hooked up to the Internet. This is heart warming.

Active Mobile-broadband Subscriptions in Nigeria
As of January 2022, the Internet penetration in Nigeria was 51 percent. The indicator expresses the percentage of the total population that uses the internet. (Statista, Aug. 3. 2022). By December 2022, there were about 28 million Facebook users in Nigeria, accounting for about 12.7 percent of the population. Interestingly, overall, 34.1 percent of the Internet users were between ages 25 and 34 years, making the age bracket the largest user base in the country, followed by those aged 18 to 24 years (Statistica, Jan 19, 2023).

In the third quarter of 2022, WhatsApp was adjudged the most popular social media platform in Nigeria. The platform was mentioned by nearly 95 percent of Internet users in the country aged 16 to 64 years. In absolute terms, the number of people using WhatsApp was estimated at approximately 4.9 million for the full year 2022 (Statista May 23, 2023). According to a survey conducted in the third quarter of 2022 the analysis, Internet users aged 16-64 years in Nigeria follow social media accounts of family, friends, and acquaintances. Roughly 59 percent of the respondents cited that they followed this type of account. Moreover, around 51 percent of the internet users indicated following accounts belonging to actors, comedians, or performers, while nearly 50 percent followed entertainment and meme accounts (Statista, May 25, 2023).

The Significance of the social media in Nigeria During 2023 General Elections
This 2023 presidential elections in Nigeria, which got Nigerians galvanised by social media ignited new grounds for this paper.

1. **It Promoted Reforms and Changes:** Investigative reporters are agents of change and their actions have caused revolutions. A major assumption about the press is that of the *fourth estate,* surviving wars and revolutions–and occasionally becoming revolutionary themselves–while at the same time providing opportunities to satisfy information, education, entertainment and economic needs. the public always looks up to the press to keep an 'eye' on those entrusted with the exercise of power and authority. Social media provided platforms for Nigerians to make contributions towards electoral reforms and protecting electoral guidelines.
2. **It Promoted Advocacy for Public Interest:** Some advocacy journalists reject that the traditional ideal of objectivity is possible in practice, either generally, or due to the presence of corporate sponsors in advertising. Some feel that the public interest is better served by a diversity of media outlets with a variety of transparent points of view, or that advocacy journalism serves a similar role to *muckrakers* or *whistleblowers*. Social media activists and citizen journalists were great agitators indicating advocacy towards mass movement as well as preferred political candidates.

3. **Promoted Government Transparency:** The press should be reporting and exposing the activities of the government helps make government officials transparent. Under the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, the press are charged "at all times to be free to uphold the fundamental objectives and to uphold the responsibility and accountability of the government to the people". Notwithstanding the failure of INEC to fully implement the provisions of the electoral guidelines such as uploading results in real time, social media activists and citizen journalists provided palpable prodding towards a measure of transparency in the elections. It is evident that social media helped promote transparency in the management of the elections.

4. **Promoted Exchange of Ideas**: social media facilitated the exchange of ideas vital to the sustenance of democracy. Since public opinion is a critical element in government, the press are always enjoined to serve as forum for the articulation of public discourse. Several social media platforms provided great platforms for social media activists and citizen journalists ventilate ideas considered critical in modern democracy.

5. **Promoted Education of the Masses:** The press are equally required to educate the masses on the goings-on in government circles. By nurturing an informed citizenry, investigative journalism empowers a more vigilant and active public. Investigative reporters do well in this regard especially as most government officials want much to be hidden. This critical function of the press must be kept alive because the public needs to be kept abreast of government activities in order to participate actively and usefully. In this regard, social media activists and citizen journalists provide education in respect of several electoral issues.

6. **Promoted Protection of Rights:** The press should protect the rights of the citizenry. The press can do this by criticizing human rights abuses and always upholding constitutional provisions and the rule of law. Social media activists and citizen journalists were a great source of inspiration especially among young political aspirants. Adequate coverage of political rights abuses has been a major focuses of online news managers.

7. **Created public opportunity to measure government performance:** Publicly held institutions need independent assessment on how they perform, and investigative journalism holds the key to this measurement. The publics indeed need be informed especially in terms of making sound electoral decisions. Social media has provided this opportunity. Social media fulfilled this function as activists and citizen journalists were also instrumental in publicising positive changes by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC).

8. **Set Agenda:** Continuous emphasis on an issue might not make government act in a particular direction, however such publications will certainly give government do something to think about. News does much in letting you know what to think about. We can state then that news stories are mind mangers setting tone for what we can consider important and worthy of attention. The prevailing new media continuously brought issues to front burners to the extent that government and public found them important. Example is the passage of the electoral law that gave rise to the election.

9. **Served as Conduit of Public Opinion**: News serves as a conduit of public opinion. This the press does as it facilitates exchange of ideas vital to the sustenance of democracy. Since public opinion is a critical element in government, the press is always enjoined to serve as forum for the articulation of public discourse by accommodating the views of people in stories. Social media served this critical function.

Theoretical Framework
Technological Determinism
The term 'technological determinism' was coined by Thorstein Veblen and this theory revolves around the proposition that technology in any given society defines its nature. Technology is viewed as the driving force of culture in a society, and it determines its course of history (Research Base, n.d.).

Technological Determinism derives from the primary article of Mcluhan (1962) theory, that we learn, feel and think the way we do because of the message we receive through the current technology that is available. The technological determinism theory holds that media technologies shape how individuals in a society think, feel, act and how a society operates as we move from one technological age to another (Griffin 2000).

The theory basically explains the fact that changes in communication technology produce profound change in our societal order. Here, communication technology is seen to have the power to transform the sensory capacity and therefore transform the way we live our life (Research Base (n.d.).

Winner's Hypotheses
Langdon Winner provided two hypotheses for this theory:
1. The technology of a given society is a fundamental influencer of the various ways in which a society exists.
2. Changes in technology are the primary and most important source that leads to change in the society (cited in Research Base, n.d.).

Methodology
The research approach is the quantitative research design and adopts the survey method. This is because the survey method can measure belief, idea, opinion, attitude, and behaviour.

Population of Study
The population comprises residents of Awka Captial Territory. The city has an estimated population of 301, 657 residents as of the 2006 Nigerian census and projects the population to about 700,657 as in 2023 (Nigerian Informer, March 1, 2021).

Sample and Sampling Procedure

A sample of 500 respondents was purposely drawn for the study. The decision was guided by the need to utilise accessible sample presumed to be valuable to the research objectives.

Instrument of Data Collection

The researcher made use of a questionnaire.

Method of Data Collection

The researcher personally retrieved the by a combination of direct and online returns. Where online returns were difficult, the researcher used the telephone interview with the questionnaire as a guide.

Method of Data Presentation and Analysis

Data were presented in tables and analysed in percentages.

Data Analysis

Table 1: Distribution of the Questionnaire

Distribution of Questionnaire	Response	Percentage
Total Questionnaire	500	100
Valid	484	97
Failed response	16	3

The analysis is based on the 484 sample size valid sample.

Table 2: Response on Major Source of Political Information

Media	Response	Percentage
Mainstream: Radio/TV/Newspaper	153	32
Social Media (Facebook, WatsApp, Twitter	331	68
Total	484	100

The table is indicative of the opinions on the current nature of social media as important means of communication in Nigeria. Faced with social media and mainstream media, the majority (68%) opted for social media as major sources source Long ago, the proportion of Americans going online for election-related news and information has more than doubled since the end of the 2000 race. Six in ten internet users went online in 2008 for campaign news, up from 52% at a similar point in 2004 and 33% in 2000 of political information (Phew Research Centre (April 15, 2009). As of January 2023, Nigeria had 31.6 million active social media users. WhatsApp is the most popular platform used in the country, with close to 95 percent of users. Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram followed as the most used social media platforms in Nigeria *Statista* (May 23, 2023).

Table 3: Popular Social Media source and Sharing Political Communication among the people.

Options	Response	Percent
Twitter	63	13
Facebook	194	40
WatsApp	227	47
Total	484	100

WhatsApp accounts for the greatest source of information from social media. This is followed by Facebook. However, a report highlighted the strength of Opera as Dam Hee Kim, Jones-Jang & Kenski (2020) analysed of national survey data collected before the 2018 U.S. midterm election which suggested that criticism, informing, and socialization motivations, but not expression, awareness, and self-promotion motivations, positively predict political information sharing on social media. Individuals, according to the report, are more likely to share political information when they are exposed to information that is disagreeable. This relationship, according to the report, is stronger among individuals with higher epistemic political efficacy and lower political knowledge.

Table 4: Social Media perceived to have been popularly deployed by political candidates in creating political awareness in Nigeria.

Options	Response	Percent
Twitter	77	16
Facebook	301	62
WatsApp	106	22
Total	484	100

Zekeri (2019), conducted a study on "Influence of Social Media on Electioneering Campaign in Nigeria's 2019 General Elections" This study examined the impact of social media on electioneering campaign in Nigeria's 2019 general elections. The study revealed that social media like Twitter, Facebook and YouTube has facilitated the direct political interactions between political aspirants and voters during the Nigeria's 2019 general elections. The study submitted that social media encourages the speedy dissemination of information to large audience within a short time.

Table 5: Perception of impact of social media as platform for political action

Options	Yes	No	
Social media increased awareness of aspirants contesting in an election.	481	3	
Social media enhanced the interaction and communication between political aspirants and voters.	322	160	
Politicians used social media to communicate party manifesto and objectives.	356	119	
Social media exposed shortcomings of politicians.	403	81	

Intyaswati, Maryani & Venus (2021), assessed whether students' use of social media impact their political knowledge. The research increased empirical research on the relation between social media use and political knowledge among Open University students in Indonesia. They proposed investigating the effect of social media use on political knowledge and possibilities of the mediation of political talk. Park (2017) found that Twitter use was a positive predictor of knowledge of political issues.

Previous research showed that the studies established that online discussions mediate information through political knowledge development (Park, 2017). The recall became possible when the information was obtained and strengthened by discussions through online networks. This result is in line with an online learning community where people come together in an online space intending to share information, learning, talking, or collaborating on a project. Most college students surveyed recognize that they practice social media and feel well conscious of political issues and use SNS for political discussion (Ahmad et al., 2019).

A survey by Bello (2018) on "Social Media and Elections in Nigeria: A Case Study of Kano State, Reflections from 2015 Elections" found that a majority of Kano residents from the sample used agreed that social media have influenced their level of engagement with the electoral processes (especially voting) in the state as a result of the contents they read from the platform. The paper recommends that the use of Social Media platforms should be encouraged. Studies indicate that media consumption promotes political engagement and that mews use influences political engagement by increasing political knowledge while guiding citizens' attitudes and judgments (Eveland & Scheufele, 2000; McLeod et al., 1996; McLeod, Scheufele, & Moy, 1999; Thorson, Swafford, & Kim, 2017). Research outcomes have equally demonstrated that consumption of online news (including through social media) promotes participation in political activities (Chan, Chen, & Lee, 2017; de Zuniga, Molyneux, & Zheng, 2014).

Conclusion
1. The paper X-rayed the use of Internet and social media in Nigeria and concludes that Access to online media is increasing compared to mainstream media. The paper concludes that the Internet has become one of the most important

technological developments on the planet. Humanity depends on it for benefits in social, cultural, political, and other realms.

2. The paper portrays Facebook as dominant compared to other social media. Facebook remains a strong social force and the most popular social media among users and there is need for change agents to exploit this persisting social force.

3. The paper highlighted Facebook as main choice of politicians as political medium social medium by politicians.

4. The paper submitted the impact of social media as platform for political action in Nigeria. Even though new media continues to place the technologically based countries ahead of the less developed ones, there seem to be n understanding that new media are shrinking communication gap. Taking a look at the journey so far, we can project the following global effects:

Recommendations

1. More access to the Internet will open more gateways to print and broadcast media. In this regard, government has a crucial obligation to provide necessary frameworks for the technology to thrive. These frameworks include reduction in access tariffs and improvement in electricity.

2. The mainstream media in Nigeria should reinvent properly in line with technological changes. Already online editions are a measure in this direction. To ensure minimal loss of profit and continued circulation of hard copies, a tie between the soft copies and hardcopies must be consolidated. The industry must design how the two could play complementary roles. Similarly, soft editions must find ways of offering sufficient gratifications which online users seek.

3. Arising from the above, change agents and government officials need to key in to the limitless opportunities provided by this new medium.

4. Social media revolutionary in every respect with immeasurable positive changes. It is advocated that an international synergy be formed aimed at simulating some quality control measures on online journalism. In this regard, national, regional and international ethical considerations should be fashioned as a means of fostering more qualitative information dissemination.

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