

Social Media and Youths Voting Behaviour in Nigeria: A Study on Political Science Students of Federal University Wukari 2024

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Abstract

Social media has connected people and issues across the globe and its increasing access to Nigerian youths for political discourse has a bearing in shaping voting behaviour during elections. The study examined the impact of social media on youth voting behaviour in Nigeria. It is anchored on Marshal McLuhan's Technological Determinism Theory. Using a mixed methods design, 448 students of the Political Science Department, Federal University Wukari who voted in the 2023 general elections in Nigeria were used as the target population. Findings show the youths utilize social media for political engagements, they connect credibility to political information accessed, their perceptions of political actors during elections are shaped by social media and it generally impacts their voting behaviour. Other factors besides social media were identified as influencing their voting behaviour. The study recommended that there be should efforts to promote digital literacy, contend with misinformation, and ensure transparency in algorithmic processes.

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Background to the Study

Democracy has availed individuals the freedom to associate and make voting choices based on the influence of many factors. Voting behaviours are crucial in democratic societies, as individual preferences are influenced by many factors. Voting behaviour is a kind of political behaviour revealed by voters and persuaded by many reasons such as emotion, religion, ethnicity, geographical location, gender etc. guiding voters to make certain decisions (Nyitse, Terhile & Cordelia, 2021). Social media has become a basic part of life with applications burgeoning. Social media is the collection of online communication channels dedicated to community-based inputs, interactions, content sharing and collaborations.

The advent of social media platforms has allowed people both as individuals and groups to connect on a range of issues including political participation. Social networks influence the behaviour of an individual just as they also impact voters' behaviour. Social media messages influence political self-expression, information seeking and real-world voting behaviour of many people (Okoro & Nwafor, 2013). Today, offline interaction among humans in society is decreasing as social networks or social media platforms have become valuable tools in encouraging and motivating people especially the youth in political processes. Virtually all political actors like candidates, political parties, election management bodies etc today utilise social media to advance their various plans, thus, social media have been a contemporary channel for influencing voters' decisions and choices. Individuals and groups also utilize social media platforms to broadcast information, especially on political participation to network of friends and associates to influence their behaviour and choices.

Nigerians every four years have the chance to cast their votes in the most direct form of political action - voting. However, the passionate process principal to an election is full of prospects to be politically engaged in ways that go further than voting. Above and beyond being an essential component of a democratic society, voting is also a key component to understanding how people network with elections and the campaigns leading up to them. Nigeria the most populous country in Africa and a vibrant democracy has witnessed significant political transformations over the years with the rapid growth of internet penetration and usage. Social media platforms have become increasingly accessible to Nigerians across different age groups and regions (Adegoke & Akende, 2019). While social media platforms were initially aimed at connecting on an individual social level, new features have enabled them to act as platforms for political discourse and involvement. These social media platforms put forward opportunities for citizens particularly the youth to share their views, engage with political content, and interact with political players, thus expectedly inspiring their attitudes and behaviours as voters. Social media has modernized communication and information sharing and its waves on various aspects of society especially politics are incontestable. However, the degree to which social media have some bearing on youths' voting behaviour during elections remains uncertain.

This study aims to be a factor in the understanding of the evolving dynamics of youths' voting behaviour in the digital age of Nigeria. In doing so, it explores how the youths utilise social media platforms for political engagement as well as information sharing during the period of election. Furthermore, it assesses the effects of social media exposure on youths' political behaviour and the potential consequences of social media influence on their voting behaviour for democratic processes in Nigeria. The study brings into play the students of the Political Science Department, Federal University Wukari as a case study to know if social media has a significant influence or not on youths' voting behaviour during the 2023 general election in Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

The use of social media is increasing among young people of voting ages in Nigeria and there seems not to be a chance that the usage will drop. Political parties and candidates often work hard to portray their interests and appeals to the electorates using various conventional and unconventional approaches during elections. Utilising social media platforms is one of the contemporary approaches employed as social media is important to democracy in today's politics. Identity politics where voting patterns have always aligned with ethnicity, religion, region etc are well established in Nigeria. Social media among other factors has the potential to influence the voting behaviour of Nigerians. Although social media has many advantages, it presents many concerns and the extent to which social media influences youth voters' behaviour is fairly not investigated, especially from the Nigerian perspective.

More research is needed to understand how voters consume and process information in particular. There are insufficient studies that focus on the effect of social media platforms on voting behaviour especially on the diffusion of political information. Scholars have disparaged the erroneous appliance of messages before, during and after elections on social media platforms among users. Political campaigns through social media platforms have been turned into instruments of inciting violence through weird rabble-rousing speeches with propaganda (Ibrahim, 2023; Salako2023). Premise on the foregoing, this study seeks to investigate social media's influence on youth voting behaviour in Nigerians and identify other factors that influence voting behaviour in Nigeria.

Research Questions

- i. To what extent do Nigerian youths use social media for political participation?
- ii. To what extent is political information on social media seen as credible by the youth?
- iii. How do social media shape the perception of voting youths on candidates and political parties?
- iv. What other factors besides social media influence the voting behaviour of youths in Nigeria?

Objectives of the study

The broad objective is to assess the impact of social media on the youths voting behaviour. The specific objectives of the study are:

- i. To know the extent Nigerian youths, use social media for political participation.
- ii. To ascertain the extent information on social media is seen as credible by the youths.
- iii. To find out how social media shapes the perception of voting youths on candidates and political parties.
- iv. To identify other factors besides social media that influence youths voting behaviour in Nigeria.

Conceptual clarifications and review of related literature

Social Media

Social media are meeting places for individuals, self-expression and sharing of opinions or information. According to Ufuophu-Biri & Ojoboh (2017), social media are new information networks and information technology using a form of interactive communication skills, where users produce the content of information and interpersonal relationships are established and maintained in the process. A typical social media service could be content sharing, web communities, or an Internet forum. In the same vein, Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), define social media as a group of internet-based applications that are built upon the ideology and technology of Web 2.0 and allow the generation and exchange of its content. On social media, the users are not passive like in the case of Television, Radio, and newspapers, rather they are active in the formation and exchange of information (Sweetser & Laricsy, 2008).

Social media, although relatively new, dates back to the advent of the World Wide Web in August 1991. After the creation of the World Wide Web came the development of the instant messaging system ICQ in 1996 and, later, Instant Messenger (Taprial & Kanwar, 2012). The first social networking sites, classmates.com and sixdegrees.com, derived from instant messaging. After the small success of these sites, developers saw an opportunity to expand with Friendster and MySpace, which both became hugely popular. In 2004, Facebook was launched by creator Mark Zuckerberg to students at Harvard University. It was eventually expanded to Boston-area Ivy League institutions and, in 2006, to the general public. Facebook was the culmination of everything that came before it (Ortiz-Ospina, 2019).

Social media have been categorized into six types: collaborative projects, microblogs, content communities, social networking sites, virtual game worlds, and virtual social worlds (Taprial & Kanwar, 2012). For example, Wikipedia is a collaborative project, Twitter is a micro-blog, YouTube is a content community, and Facebook is a social networking site. They all fall under the guise of social media but can be broken out into distinctive groups. For this study, Facebook was selected as a leader of social media. Studies have shown that news-related stories shared via Facebook are 20 times more likely to be shared than news-related stories on Twitter (Almgren & Olsson, 2016).

Social media have continued to pique the interest of many due to their multiplatform options (Kumar, Novak, & Tomkins, 2006). Fourth-screen technology (i.e. smart phones

and tablets) has allowed social media to expand and allow users to take social media with them wherever they go (Shah, 2016). Social media applications such as Instagram and Snapchat were developed through the Smartphone phenomenon (The Nielsen Company (US) 2011). All of these advances in social media have given the public more access to information than ever before (Wohn, Lampe, Vitaka, & Ellison, 2011). It is important to understand that the success of social media is based not on access to information, but on access to other people and interactions based on the provided content (Carr & Hayes, 2015).

Voting and Voting Behaviour

Voting is the key type of political participation in moderate democratic societies and the study of voting behaviour is a highly specialised sub-field within political science. The study of voting patterns consistently converges on the determinants of why people vote the way they do and how they arrive at the decisions they make (Namo & Attah, 2024). Voting is one of the stages in the process of election. It is a hint of an opinion or choice as to a subject on which one has a particular right to be asked. It is the franchise of citizens to support or undermine a particular person, view, programme or policy. According to the Collins English Dictionary, voting is the action or process of indicating choice, opinion or will on a question such as the choosing of a candidate, by some recognized means such as a ballot. Voting is free and voluntary; no one can be forced to vote. It is also a misdemeanour to try to stop another person from voting. Voting behaviour in contrast is the way that diverse people are predisposed to vote. The concept of voting behaviour implies the study of voters' preferences, alternatives, programmes, ideology, policy etc., on which elections are fought. Amid other stuff, voting behaviour helps to arrive at a decision on which officials are preferred to run our governments. It is to a certain extent a complex and versatile subject.

Election

It is difficult to say the exact meaning of election because it is associated with many meanings. Elections are a necessary condition for political representation. Elections are at the very heart of democracy (Schumpeter, 1975). Schumpeter views election as an 'institutional arrangement' which serves as a means of filling public office by a competitive struggle for the people's vote. Nnoli (2003) defines elections as the process of choice agreed upon by a group of people. It enables the people to select one or a few people out of many to occupy one or several authority positions. This process involves rules and regulations designed to ensure a certain degree of fairness and justice to all concerned. Elections are not restricted to political organizations; they apply to a wide range of organizations such as clubs, societies, etc.

In politics, it is the people from whom the modern government derives its strength. It is the people who directly or indirectly control the government through their political rights, especially through their right to vote. This right to vote is called franchise or suffrage. The exercise of the right to suffrage by the citizens in the choice of their government is called an election. The particular choice by a particular citizen is called

voting. Those people who enjoy the right to suffrage are collectively called the electorate and individually called the voter (Namo, Danbala & Andeley 2019).

Social Media and Political Engagement

Social media has swiftly grown to be a means not just for news but also for political commentary and civic engagement. A study done by the Pew Research Centre in 2012 justifies that 66% of social media users used a social networking site to engage in some sort of civic or political activity (Rainie et al. 2012). Voters are inclined to post their opinions and fashion their political content on social media networks (Smith 2009). The 2012 Pew Internet Project established that out of the social media users surveyed, the majority (38%) of them used social media to “like” or promote information related to politics and 35% of social media users used networking websites to persuade others to vote. These social media platforms are not only utilized to persuade voting but they are also employed to encourage others to be active, especially on issues that the social media user is fanatical about and defends. 33% of social media platform users take advantage of the sites to repost political content that was published by others to communicate information and broadcast the news about social issues. 28% of social media platform users do not do much other than post links to political stories or articles for their followers to read. Ultimately, the Pew Internet Project revealed that 20% of the social media users evaluated used networking platforms to follow or tag elected officials and prospective candidates (Rainie et al. 2012). The analysis agrees with the thought that people decide the candidates they want to vote for based on their failures and successes; social media is where candidates showcase themselves and where they can connect with voters. Voting behaviour is significantly influenced by posts, tweets, and largely internet activity since voters, predominantly young voters, tend to look online first before making a voting decision (Sharma & Parma 2016, 8).

Bryan Boroughs' thesis for Georgetown University titled “Social Networking Websites and Voter Turnout” discovers that logging on political content on social media platforms heightened the likelihood that someone voted in an election. The outcome of a regression analysis conducted by Boroughs on data pulled together from a survey by the Pew Research Centre finds that younger voters who are more prone to social media platforms were to a large extent affected by political content on social media websites. People in their 20s were 9.3% to 16.5% more likely to vote after accessing political content online whereas people in their 80s were 3.9% to 5.6% more likely to vote (Boroughs 2010, p. 21). Exposure and usage of social media can affect people's political behaviour. Social media's ability to organize people and recruit volunteers to act for or against a particular issue is another effect that social media could have on voters. Opening political content on a social networking site can be “more effective at motivating other potential voters and altering the political discourse” (Boroughs 2010, 1).

The obvious fact that social media is an effective place where people can socialize with one another is its most interesting and distinctive feature. The social connections refined online conversely symbolize the ones made offline. A substantial element of elections and

campaigning is contestants conveying the issues to the public. Contestants win elections by reaching out to voters, communicating with them, and assuring them that their concerns will be taken care of once they are in office. Contestants do not only utilize social media to connect with their constituents, the citizens in turn also use social media to find out things about contestants and persuade others to vote for certain candidates. According to Rainie (2012), voters are inclined to a trend called the "social vote," the indication that constituents are likely to vote if those in their socialized groups are voting. According to his study, 74% of registered voters belong to the "social vote" group. Voting and persuading others to vote occurs in numerous ways: it can be through person-to-person talks, by phone, through e-mails, and social media. Voters, especially the younger ones who are in the majority are more likely to exploit the last technique and are also inclined to be persuaded to vote through person-to-person talks with other voters close to them. According to a study performed by Tochukwu (2024), during the Nigerian Presidential election of 2023, 54% of registered voters had person-to-person talks with family and friends to persuade them to vote. This is in comparison with 22% of registered voters who through social media platforms like Facebook, X (formerly known as Twitter) etc persuaded others to vote and let them know how they were voting. According to the study, 29% of voters utilized social media platforms to announce their vote (Tochukwu, 2024).

Theoretical Framework

This study is entrenched in Technological Determinism Theory (TDT) conceived by Marshal McLuhan in 1964. The theory argues that the technology of mass media shapes attitudes and behaviour and leads to a revolution in the way the social system operates. One of the basic principles of the theory of Technology Determinism or Media Ecology is that man's survival in the world is patterned by modifications in the system of human communications. Part of the analysis is that media technology influences the way we individually feel, act and think in society and how society operates as it moves from one epoch to another. In other words, we feel, act and think the way we do as a result of the messages available through the prevailing media technology. The historical perspective of the theory proposes that revolutions in technology from time to time have brought corresponding changes in societies. The theory put forward that the performance of a social fabric changes fittingly with the coming out of every new technology. For example, we develop our sense of hearing when we listen to the radio, we engage our hearing and visual senses when we watch television, and then transfer these senses developed into our daily lives.

The theorist argues that humans lack free will, whatever is in vogue as a medium of communication is adapted. We adapt to feel, act and think like everyone else. According to McLuhan "We shape our tools and they in turn shape us". "We have a symbolic relationship with mediated technology; we create technology and technology in turn re-creates who we are" (West & Turner, 2010).

The theory ensnares three conjectures: the first is that media inspire every act in society; the next is that media shape views and systematize human experiences; and lastly, media connect the world. Finnemann (2002) proposed that social media has not replaced other types of traditional mass media. Rather it has integrated all other forms of media like “electronic text, the telephone, radio and television.

The relevance of the theory to this study is that people using social networking sites can access and read almost all newspaper editions, make easy and cost-free or less costly phone calls, they can listen to every radio channel of the world effortlessly and also watch any television channel of their choice. Unlike mainstream media, social media platforms offer a variety of content that is contributed by the users themselves. Such content may include reporting of local events and happenings and comments on various contents that are extracted from traditional mass media and uploaded online. Technological Determinism Theory (TDT) heralds that the emergence of the internet and its taking up in mobilizing people for political activities, impact the electoral process and the overall political environment.

Methodology

The study looked at how social media influenced voting behaviour in Nigeria's 2023 general elections using both quantitative and qualitative research designs. Using mixed methods, the researchers were able to look at the research topics from a variety of perspectives, resulting in a more comprehensive understanding of the issues. The survey method was adopted for this research to understand the relationship between the variables. Thus, opinions and perceptions of the population were investigated using a questionnaire. The questionnaire was drafted using the nominal, ordinal, and Likert scale techniques to fit the objectives of the study.

The study population consisted of 448 (year one to year four 2022/2023 session) students of the Political Science Department, Federal University Wukari who registered and voted in the 2023 general elections in Nigeria. The sample size of 211 was determined using the Pathak (2013:94-95) formula. It is an ideal method to use when the population size (from which the sample is taken) is known. A convenience sampling technique was used to administer the questionnaire and discover respondents who satisfied the study's requirements. To account for probable abrasion, the sample size was increased by 21 eligible respondents (10% of 211) making it 232 to reduce the influence of a high attrition rate on statistical analysis while also improving the results' validity. In all, 213 questionnaires were retrieved from respondents for the study.

The sample size was calculated thus:

$$SS = \frac{PS}{[1 + (PS \times PE^2)]}$$

Where:

SS = sample size

PS = population size = 448

PE = precision of error = 5% = 0.05

The sample size, therefore:

$$SS = \frac{448}{[1 + (448 \times 0.05^2)]}$$

$$SS = \frac{448}{[1 + (448 \times 0.0025)]}$$

$$SS = \frac{448}{1 + 1.12}$$

$$SS = \frac{448}{2.12}$$

$$SS = 211.3$$

Sample Size (SS) = 211.

A sample size from each level was drawn using the sampling statistical calculation formula as presented below:

$$\frac{Nh}{\Sigma N} \times \frac{n}{1}$$

Where Nh = total population from a level.

n = total sample size

ΣN = total population of all levels

Table 1: Population and sample size information on all the levels

Level	Frequency	Sample Size	10% added	Total Returned%
100	118	56	6	62 (90%)
200	136	64	6	70 (89%)
300	111	52	5	57 (93%)
400	83	39	4	43 (98%)
Total	448	211	21	232 (100%)

Source: Authors' Computation 2024

The questionnaire data were presented in tables and analysed with the outcomes communicated.

Presentation of Data

Table 2: Demographic profile of sampled respondents

Level	Female	Male	Total	18 - 22 years	23 - 27 Years	28-32 Years	33 years above	Total
100	21(30%)	35(24%)	56(26%)	34(61%)	21(38%)	1(2%)	0(0%)	56
200	18(26%)	44(31%)	62(29%)	9(15%)	32(52%)	17(27%)	4(6%)	62
300	20(29%)	33(23%)	53(25%)	5(9%)	39(74%)	6(11%)	3(6%)	53
400	11(16%)	31(22%)	42(20%)	0(0%)	26(62%)	9(21%)	7(17%)	42
Total	70(33%)	143(67%)	213	48(23%)	118(55%)	33(15%)	14(7%)	213

Source: Authors' Questionnaire (2024)

Data in Table 2 shows the demographic information of the sampled respondents. Based on gender, 33% of the respondents are female and 67% are male. The implication is that there are more male registered voters in Nigeria than female registered voters. This agrees with the 2023 registered voters' data released by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) (Jimoh, 2023).

On the age bracket of the respondents, 23% are between 18 to 22 years, 55% are between 23 to 27 years, 33% are between 28 to 32 years and 14% are 33 years and above. Although INEC announced that out of the 93.46 million Nigerians eligible to vote in the 2023 general election, the youth from 18 to 34 years form the largest voting bloc with 39.65% (37,060,399). This finding is in line with a study by Ofori (2019) that the majority of users of technology are within the age bracket of twenty (20) to forty (40) years since the usage of ICTs and other communication tools is part of their everyday lives. The above data on age bracket means that youths between 23 to 27 years are more among the youths who registered to vote in the 2023 election. The implication is that this group of youths is more influenced to vote.

Research Question 1:

To what extent do Nigerian youths use social media for political participation?

Table 3: Distribution of respondents' social media usage among youths for political participation

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	198	93
No	15	7
Total	213	100

Source: Authors' Questionnaire (2024)

The data in Table 3 signify that 93% of Nigerian youths use social media for political engagements while 7% do not engage with social media. The connotation is that social media is a veritable tool to engage the voters, especially candidates and political parties.

Table 4: Distribution of how long respondents use social media for political engagements.

Variable	Frequency	percentage
1 to 2 years	77	36
3 to 5 years	74	35
6 to 9 years	57	27
10 years above	5	2
Total	213	100

Source: Authors' Questionnaire

From the data in the above table, 36% utilize social media for political engagement in the last one (1) to two (2) years, 35% for the past three (3) to five (5) years, 27% for the past six (6) to nine (9) years and 2% of the youths have been engaging social media in the past ten (10) years and above. This implies an increasing trend in the utilization of social media among the youths, which further signifies an increase in the influence of social media on the voting behaviour of the youths in Nigeria.

Table 5: Distribution of which social media platforms respondents use the most

Social media platform	Frequency	Percentage
WhatsApp	68	32
Facebook	77	36
Instagram	19	9
X (Twitter)	36	17
Others	13	6
Total	213	100

Source: Authors' Questionnaire (2024)

Table 5 shows that 32% of the youths utilize WhatsApp platforms most, 36% which is the majority utilize Facebook, 9% Instagram, 17% X (Twitter) and 6% use other social media platforms. The increasing trend in the utilization of social media among the youth can be attributed to the wide coverage of political-related issues on the Facebook platform and its appreciable high level of education.

Table 6: How common respondents use social media on their device

Level	Frequency	Percentage
Regularly	153	72
Occasionally	34	16
Rarely	22	10
Never	4	2
Total	213	100

Source: Authors' Questionnaire (2024)

The above table depicts the respondents' use of social media on their devices. It shows that the majority of the youths that is 72% use social media regularly, 16% use social media

occasionally, 10% rarely use social media and 2% do not utilize social media on their device. The implication is that the majority of the youths use social media regularly hence the youths are the most politically active people in Nigeria.

Research Question 2:

To what extent is information on social media seen as credible by the youth?

Table 7: Information on social media is credible.

Social Media Impact	Frequency					Mean	SD	Decision
	SA	A	D	SD	Total			
	4	3	2	1				
1. I believe in political news on social media.	77	102	15	19	213	3.1	1.7	Accept
2. Social media is a credible platform for getting political news.	51	121	18	23	213	2.9	1.7	Accept
3. Social media is credible in encouraging political participation.	62	79	40	32	213	2.8	1.7	Accept
4. I prefer political candidates who engage voters on social media to those who do not.	38	72	56	47	213	2.5	1.6	Accept
Grand Mean						2.8	1.67	

Source: Authors' Questionnaire (2024)

Note: The acceptance (criterion) mean point for the items was 2.50 and any mean (X) below 2.5 was regarded as rejected.

The grand mean (Mean = 2.8, S.D. = 1.67) in Table 7 is an indication that the respondents connect a high level of credibility to messages on social media. From the analysis of responses, it is accepted that the respondents believe political messages they see on social media with a mean = 3.1. The respondents believe that social media is a credible platform for getting political news with a mean = 2.9. The acceptance of item 3 also shows that the respondents believe social media is credible in encouraging youths to participate in politics (mean = 2.8). It is also an indication that the youths prefer political candidates who engage them on social media to those who do not (mean = 2.5).

Research Question 3:

How do social media shape the perception of voting youths on candidates and political parties?

Table 8: Social media shapes the perception of voters on candidates and political parties.

Social Media Impact	Frequency				Mean	SD	Decision
	SA	A	D	SD			
	4	3	2	1	Mean	Criterion	
	Total						2.5
1. My choice of political party and candidate is influenced by social media.	67	53	48	45213	2.7	1.6	Accept
2. Social media is the most effective avenue for politicians to boost their image to the public.	93	87	14	19213	3.1	1.8	Accept
3. I believe political candidates who are not active on social media are unserious about their ambitions.	82	71	19	41213	2.9	1.7	Accept
4. I would vote for a politician who is on social media instead of one who is not.	32	37	65	79213	2.1	1.4	Reject
Grand Mean					2.7		

Source: Authors' Questionnaire (2024)

Based on the data in Table 8 above, the grand mean of 2.7 shows acceptance that social media shapes the perception of youths' voting behaviour on candidates and political parties generally. The respondents agreed strongly that social media influences their choice of political parties and candidates with a mean = of 2.7. The analysis also accepts with majority of respondents' position that social media was an avenue for politicians to boost their image with the public with a mean = 3.1. On item 3 with the mean = 2.9, respondents also perceived political candidates who were not active on social media as unserious with their ambition.

Research Question 4:

What are the impacts of social media on youths' voting behaviour in Nigeria?

Table 9: Impact of social media on youth voting behaviour in Nigeria.

Social Media Impact	Frequency					Mean (X)	SD	Decision
	SA	A	D	SD	Total			
	4	3	2	1	213	Mean		2.5
1. I followed political news on social media.	68	63	34	48	213	2.7	1.6	Accept
2. I became aware of political news through the social media.	54	78	39	42	213	2.7	1.6	Accept
3. I share political news on social media.	62	51	68	32	213	2.7	1.6	Accept
4. Social media helped me to become more politically active.	87	92	23	11	213	3.2	1.8	Accept
Grand Mean						2.83		

Source: Authors' Questionnaire (2024)

Table 9 shows the data collected on the fourth research question to measure the impact of social media on respondents' political participation. The majority of respondents Strongly Agreed that social media does have an impact on their participation (with a mean = 2.7). Respondents specifically agreed that they followed political news on social media during the electioneering period (Mean = 2.19, S.D. = .956). Also, they agreed on being aware of political news through social media (Mean = 2.11 S.D. = .895). They agreed that social media helped them to become more politically active (Mean = 2.28, S.D. 1.053).

Research Question 5:

What other factors besides social media influence youths' voting behaviour in Nigeria?

Table 10: Other factors that influence youths' voting behaviour

Factors	Frequency	Percentage
Party affiliation	23	11
Party manifesto (policies and programs)	32	15
The personality of the candidates	9	4
Prevailing economic situations	18	8
Family and friends (close relations)	12	6
Performance of the government of the day	47	22
Political rallies	10	5
Ethnic consideration	29	14
Religious inclinations	33	15
Total	213	100

Source: Authors' Questionnaire (2024)

The respondents identified the above in Table 10 as factors other than social media and other forms of media influencing voter behaviour. 11% listed party affiliation, 15% party

manifesto, 4% the personality of the candidates, 8% prevailing economic conditions, 6% family and friends, 22% performance of the government of the day, 5% political rallies, 14% identified ethnic consideration and 15% religious' inclinations. These factors are common with the study undertaken by Casey (2015). The implication is that the majority of Nigerian youth voters are evaluative voters, they put other factors into consideration before deciding to vote. Voting decisions are influenced by a variety of factors, including but not limited to party identification, candidate characteristics, policy positions, campaign strategies, and economic conditions. These factors collectively shape the democratic process and have implications for the functioning of democratic systems.

Findings

The findings of this study reveal the following:

- i. The majority of Nigerian youths use social media platforms for political engagements with an increasing trend and Facebook is the most utilized social media platform.
- ii. Nigerian youth connect a high level of credibility to information on social media.
- iii. Social media shape the perceptions of youths on political parties and candidates during elections.
- iv. Other factors influence the voting behaviour of youths in Nigeria besides social media and other forms of media.

Conclusion

Most of the Nigerian youths use social media for political engagements, especially in the last two years. Social media platforms like Facebook, WhatsApp and X (Twitter) are the most utilized social media platforms among Nigerian youths. The youths see social media as a credible medium for encouraging political participation as they believe and trust the information they access through social media. The youths largely admit that social media influences their voting decisions in elections as social media serves as the most effective avenue for politicians to boost their image, seeing politicians who do not engage them through social media as unserious with their ambitions. Social media has a great impact in influencing the voting behaviour of the youths as they follow up with news on social media commonly and share their views with family and friends, thus becoming more active politically. Besides social media, the youths' voting behaviour is influenced by political party affiliations and manifestoes, the personality of candidates, the prevailing economic situations, family and friends, the performance of the government in power, political rallies, and ethnic and religious inclinations.

Recommendation

- I. Increased and improved access to social media is important for voters to get informed to develop their voting behaviour. As such, efforts should be strengthened to enhance Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in the country to promote digital literacy, contend with misinformation, and ensure transparency in algorithmic processes to fashion an improved political atmosphere that permits voters to make knowledgeable decisions.

- ii. Policymakers need to consider making rules that will advance ingenuousness and reliability in the sphere of social media political messages. This can involve directing social media platform management to give information on people funding political advertisements and enforcing severe penalties for propagating deceptions or involvement in destructive online electoral impairment to promote a more progressive democratic voting process.

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