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An Appraisal of the Utilisation of Social Media for Political Communication in the 2011 Nigerian Presidential Election

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Abstract

The study is a survey aimed at examining the utilisation of social media for political communication during the 2011 presidential election in Nigeria. The rationale behind the study was to determine whether voters' choice of presidential candidates was influenced by their social media use. 249 respondents selected through random sampling responded to 249 copies of questionnaire administered. The results of the descriptive statistics show that majority of the respondents' choice of presidential candidates during the 2011 presidential election was influenced by the use of social

media as indicated by high value of mean (1.5805). Similarly, the respondents were of the opinion that the two selected presidential candidates were popular because they used social media in their political campaign (mean value of 1.5575). In addition, the respondents affirmed that their voting pattern during the 2011 presidential elections was influenced by social media usage. This was validated by a high mean value of (1.6667). Similarly, the result of the test of hypothesis indicated that voters' choice of political candidates was influenced by political communication on social media. The findings further indicated that religious affiliations and ethnicity were also factors that influenced voter's choice of candidates. In view of the findings of this study, it was therefore concluded that social media have redefined the landscape of political communication in Nigeria and it should continue to be used in future elections in Nigeria. It is also recommended that electorate should also ensure that they deemphasized ethnic and religious considerations in their voting patterns in future elections; only credible candidates should be voted into power.

Key words: Communication, Election, Politics, and Social media

Introduction

The influence of new media technology in political communication across the globe cannot be overemphasized. In recent times, the social media are playing a dominant role in political mobilization, participation and electioneering campaigns in both developed and developing countries across the continent of the world. It is on record that since President Barack Obama of the United State of America efficient use of the social media, there has been a growing use of new media technologies in facilitating political communication in contemporary times. Obama's victory is largely attributed to the massive deployment of social media by his campaign organization which provided inspiration to other world leaders. For instance, President Goodluck Jonathan and other political candidates equally used the social media to execute their political campaign during the 2011 presidential elections. Throughout history, political campaigns have evolved around the advancing technologies that are available to political candidates. As technology develops, politicians are able to deploy them to facilitate the dissemination of their manifestos (Emruli & Baca, 2011 p. 155).

In Nigeria, the 2011 general elections were the first litmus test of the use of social media by political parties, political candidates, and the civil society organizations. The election was historic in the sense that it was the first time ever that new media technologies like Facebook, Blogs, LinkedIn and other social networks facilitated political communication and participation in Nigeria (Dagona, Karick, & Abubakar, 2013, p.2). Thus, these new media technologies have redefined methods of political communication in contemporary times and thereby led to significant shift towards the utilization of these modern tools in the electoral process. This new paradigm shift has

challenged previous methods used for political communication where television, radio and newspapers dominated coverage of political campaigns, and thus became the primary source of election-related information. However, today, the social media have become a major avenue where political parties and candidates connect with the electorate to share vital information about their policies, programmes and manifestos. Because of the ease, reach and speed associated with the social media, it has become a tool revolutionizing the field of political communication globally. It is upon this paradigm shift in the communication industry that this study appraised the utilization of social media during the 2011 presidential electioneering campaign.

Statement of the Problem

Nigeria held its general election in 2011 which provided an opportunity for voters to elect the president that would pilot the activities of the state for the next four years. Apart from the conventional media of communication like radio, television and the newspapers available to political candidates and major stakeholders in the electioneering process to communicate their messages to the electorate, the social media were massively deployed for the dissemination of political messages during the elections.

It is an incontrovertible fact that new media technologies have become an integral tool of political communication on a global scale. The medium is gradually becoming a dependable tool in influencing and changing the opinions and behaviour of the public. Recognizing the huge benefits derived from the social media for political communication, Nigerian politicians have embraced and exploited it for political campaigns during the 2011 presidential elections. According to Facebook statistics (2010, p.2) “at least one million, seven hundred and fourteen Nigerians use the social media especially Facebook, with a good number of them being young”. However, there is no comprehensive knowledge of how this “new form of media” can facilitate as well as impact on political communication in Nigeria. This study therefore investigated how social media were utilized for political communication during the 2011 presidential elections.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of the study is to basically evaluate the extent to which social media are redefining the landscape of political communication in Nigeria. In doing this, the 2011 general election was critically examined to show how social media were used to communicate political messages by the various presidential aspirants. The specific objectives of the study are to:

- (1) Assess the influence of social media on voter’s choice of political candidates during the 2011 presidential election in Nigeria.

- (2) Find out whether the popularity of the presidential candidates during the 2011 presidential election has any significant relationship with their use of social media.
- (3) Determine the influence of social media on the voting pattern of the electorate during the 2011 presidential election.

Research Questions

- (1) To what extent did social media influence voters' choice of political candidates during the 2011 presidential election
- (2) Was the popularity of presidential candidates during the 2011 presidential election influenced by their social media usage?
- (3) To what extent did social media influence voting pattern of electorate during the 2011 presidential election.

Research Hypotheses

- Ho 1:** Voter's choice of political candidates in the 2011 presidential election was not influenced by political communication on social media.
- Ho 2:** The popularity of Presidential aspirants in the 2011 general election has no significant relationship with their social media use during the election.
- Ho 3:** Electorate voting pattern during the 2011 elections was not influenced by their exposure to political messages on social media.

Significance of the Study

Being a relatively new field in the ever-dynamic field of communication in Nigeria, the study will provide additional knowledge on the subject matter. It is hoped that the study in its practical value will educate politicians and political parties on the importance of social media in contemporary political communication, since social media tools are yet to be fully explored for political campaigns in Nigeria. Also, this study will provide insights to the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and civil society organizations in designing programmes that would promote the use of new media technologies in the political process in Nigeria. Lastly, the findings of this study would serve as a springboard for future research in the field of political communication.

Theoretical Framework: Uses and Gratifications Theory

Uses and Gratifications Theory provided the framework for this study. According to Baran and Davis (2003), the origin of the theory is often credited to Herta Herzog. They went further to establish that Herzog's article entitled "motivations and gratifications of daily serial listeners" was the first published research to provide an in-depth

examination of media gratifications. Sweetser and Kaid (2008) opined that the theory has been more recently used to determine the gratifications of entertainment media. The theory also has a long history of investigating political information seeking motivations.

Blumer and McQuail (1969) found that gratifications sought from watching political broadcasts clustered into three constructs; political reason such as reinforcement or vote guidance; surveillance for keeping up with the issues; and excitement such as seeing which political party would win. With the development of the internet and its subsequent deployment for the dissemination of political information, researchers have applied the uses and gratifications perspective to online political information seeking. Kaye and Johnson (2002) examined gratification for seeking political information online and found that primary motivations to be guidance, information seeking and surveillance, entertainment and social utility. These scholars also link media use political attitudes and behaviours. To buttress this assertion, Kaye and Johnson (2002) in a study reported that higher levels of self-efficacy are associated with information seeking and surveillance, and higher interest in politics is correlated with accessing political information online for social utility and information seeking surveillance.

The theory according to Anaeto, Onabanjo and Osifeso (2008, p.71) is concerned with what people do with the media instead of what the media do to people. The major thrust of the theory subscribes to the assumption that consumers of mass media content influence the effect of the mass media on them. Hence media consumers are not passive but active in determining what they use the media for. Folarin (2005) observed that mass media audience have some certain needs that are dear to them that is why they are exposed to, attend to, and retain media messages because of the perceived gratification derivable from such messages. The theory is relevant to this study because users of social media feel that the medium will satisfy their curiosity and meet their information need, and thus make them active participants in the political communication process. Therefore, they are able to select specific messages on a variety of social media platforms to connect to political activities within and outside their geographical location.

Literature Review

An Overview of Social Media

According to Sherman (2000) the term “social media” was in 2007 coined by Danah in Boyd of the school of information at the University of California and Nicole B. Ellison of the Department of Telecommunications, information studies and media at Michigan State University. Even though the term is usually regarded by several people to mean the same with similar concepts like new media and social networking

sites, however, the two concepts are not actually the same. In order to rightly contextualize the concept of social media, it is imperative to consider what social networking sites are. Boyd and Ellison (2008, P. 21) opined that “social networking sites are web-based services that allow individuals to construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, articulates a list of other users with whom they share a common connection, and view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system”. Boyd and Ellison’s definition provides us with an understanding for describing social media. According to them, social media is a medium that allows individuals to share important information with friends. Social media therefore, is a subset of information communication technologies.

Corroborating Boyed and Ellison’s definition, Chijioke (2013) asserted that “social media are simply internet based interactive platforms through which people can create and exchange information in a participatory manner on a real-time basis.” He went further to note that they are online democratic and participatory communication channels that allow inhibited exchange of information and documents among users. According to Arthur (2011), social media are internet-based tools and services that allow users to engage with each other, generate content, distribute, and search for information online. It is the interactive or collaborative nature of the medium that makes them “social”.

In a nutshell, this paper defined social media as online tools that allow communication of information online and make participation and collaboration possible. Specifically, social media here is used to refer to Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Blogs, MySpace, Friendster, Linkedin and many others. The advent of the internet which brought about the development of different forms of social media platforms is increasingly supporting democratic participation and free flow of information between individuals in emerging democracies. Citizens are not merely consuming information content, but are privileged to become content producers, thereby encouraging participatory democracy which is the hallmark of democracy.

Conceptualizing Political Communication

According to Agudosi (2007), political communication is the dissemination of information about the functioning of a political entity in order to influence the behaviour of the audience in a variety of ways. He went further to say that it is also the interactive process concerning transmission of information among politicians, the news media and the public. On the same view, Graber and Smith (2005) opined that political communication involves the construction, sending, receiving, and processing of messages that potentially have significant direct or indirect impact on politics. Political communication is an increasingly important area in communication and media studies. A study by Okoro and Diri (2009) has shown the importance of

the media in contributing significantly in creating public awareness and mobilizing participation in the political process. The media therefore help citizens to reach informed decisions about what course of action to take and also offer the populace the platform to be educated on political relevant information. It is on this premise that Rush and Althoff (1972) cited in Akasoro (2011) conceived political communication to be:

The process by which politically-relevant information is transmitted from one part of the political system to another, and between the social and political systems. It is a continuous process involving the exchange of information between individuals and groups of individuals at all levels of society, and includes not only the expression of the views and wishes of members of society, but also the means by which the views and proposals of those in power are transmitted to the society and the latter's reaction to those views and proposals.

From all the above definitions given by various scholars, political communication is essentially important in a democratic society since the mass media are the purveyor of political information and education of the electorates.

Review of Empirical Studies

According to Clark and Aufderheide (2009, p.1), social media are increasingly becoming popular among politicians and their organizations as a means to disseminate political messages, learn about the interest and needs of constituents and the broader public, raise funds, and build networks of support. Lending credence to this assertion, Hong and Nadler (2011) observed that in a very short space of time, politicians in modern democracies across the world have eagerly adopted social media for engaging their constituents, entering into direct dialogs with citizens and enabling vivid political discussions. Raiz (2010) equally posited that in the past five years, elections conducted in Africa witnessed a massive use of social media during electioneering campaigns by key political figures, political parties and civil society organizations. This development has made researchers in recent times to investigate the influence of social media in the sphere of political communication. This perhaps explains why researchers like Graber and Smith (2005) contend that a great deal of research efforts has gone into assessments of the role played by new media in providing information to those citizens and politicians alike who need to fulfil their civic duties.

A number of studies have been conducted by scholars on the growing influence of social media during political campaigns, for instance, a study by Kushin and Yamamoto (2010) attempted to determine whether social media usage actually impact on political self-efficacy and involvement of electorates during the 2008 US

presidential election. Their findings show that there was a drastic rise in the use of social media by political candidates as well as the electorates. According to them, 27% of young people reported obtaining political information from the social media. Corroborating their finding, Owen, Soule, Nairne, Chalif, House., and Davidson, (2011) remarked that the 2008 US election marked a breakthrough year for political use of new media and social networks specifically. They further opined that social networking websites played an especially innovative and important role in the protracted primary race between Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton. Obama subsequent victory at the main election was largely attributed to his massive use of the social media during the electioneering campaigns.

Similarly, Warren (2009) investigated the use of social networking site Facebook in 2008 presidential election in America. The study was specifically design to analyze whether Facebook might be a practical campaign tool to target young voters, particularly college students. A survey research method was adopted for the study to collect data from 212 students at the University of Central Missouri to determine if Facebook was a viable campaign tool. The study concludes that college students that participated in the political activities on Facebook felt more motivated to vote in 2008 presidential election and the students who had Facebook account had better identified with the candidates due to their presence and the information they received on face book.

McLaughlin and Osborne (1997, p.10) Cited in Alakali, Titus, Akpan and Tarnongo (2013) revealed that nearly three-quarter (73%) of American internet users, or 54% of all voters went online in 2010 for news or information about midterm elections or communicate with others about campaign and the information voters are getting online, appears to have sway. In addition, one third of respondents said the information they saw online made them to vote for or against a particular candidate. This underscored the role of social in the US presidential election.

In another related study, Larsson and Moe (2011) conducted a study on Twitter use during the 2011 Swedish election and found that Twitter also serves as a channel for disseminating political information and not for political dialog with the electorates. Larsson and Moe study revealed that Swedish political elites see Twitter as a medium to communicate political contents to the people and not necessarily as a tool to engage the electorates in political conversation. On the contrary, Williams and Gulati (2009) research on the extent of Facebook use by congressional candidates during election campaigns, discovered that the number of facebook supporters can be considered a valid indicator of electoral success. In the context of Dutch election, Utz (2009) showed that social networking sites provided an opportunity for politicians to reach individuals interested in politics. Their view of candidates' profiles further

strengthened their exiting attitudes. Confirming Utze's study the Pew Research Centre (2014) examined the use of new media techniques in Iowa and New Hampshire. The aim of the study was to determine whether or not the websites of political candidates were being utilized by potential voters. They found that 30% of likely voters in Iowa and 29% in New Hampshire said they visited candidate's websites. Roughly the same percentage has viewed political candidate's videos online as well. Meanwhile, quite few of the respondents have joined a social networking page such as Facebook or MySpace.

The 2011 general elections provided political aspirants the avenue to use social media tools to connect with voters and constituents for the first time in Nigeria political arena; for instance, Ekine (2010) reported that President Goodluck Jonathan had nearly 3000,000 followers on his Facebook account following the step of president Barack Obama of the United State. Corroborating further, Okoro and Nwafor (2013) conducted a study titled "social and political participation in Nigeria during the 2011 general elections: The lapses and the lessons". The objectives of the study were to find out the role played by social media in the political participation of Nigerians, observe the lapses in the use of social media during the elections, and the lessons learnt from social media use in the course of the election. The findings of their study revealed that 93% of the respondents attested to the fact they used social media for political participation during the election. Respondents also said they used different social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, SMS calls, and YouTube to participate during the election. The study also identified some lapses in the cause of the use of social media in the electioneering process.

Furthermore, civil society groups and activists were not left out in the political process. Groups such as "Safe Nigeria Group", "Vote or Quench", "Enough is Enough", "Light up Nigeria" and "Sleeves up Nigeria", and "Reclaim Naija", among others were formed in order to mobilize and create awareness for mass participation in the election. Since these groups were mostly dominated by young people, they heavily employed social media to initiate and put up a youth presidential debates, and share intelligence to push forward the campaign for creditable elections on social media platforms. In doing this, the mainstream media struck a working relationship with social media platforms that enhance both citizen's participation and professional journalist practices.

Journalists from various media organizations in the country engaged with citizens on Facebook and citizen's contributions informed the journalist's questions during interview with political institution such as INEC. For instance, there was convergence of different media of communication like the print media and television and social networking sites to monitor, cover and report election proceedings from different

polling stations. In regard to this, Channels Television features regular live coverage through their websites, ipad, iphone, and other devices. During the elections, the organization established a four-person social media team, with one each handling the website, Twitter, Facebook, and the fourth feeding information from the newsroom to the other three members of the team (Asuni & Farris, 2011). This therefore facilitated simultaneous transition on Television, Twitter, and Facebook respectively. In the same vein, *Thisday Newspaper* and *Tell magazine* were able to use Facebook to update people with proceedings of the election as well as provided the avenue for members of the public to post their comments on Facebook.

Methodology

The survey research design method was used to execute the study. The study utilized the instrument of the questionnaire to collect data for the study. In collecting data for the study, primary and secondary sources were used. For the primary data, the questionnaire was used as an instrument to elicit response from the respondents.

The study population is made up of Mass Communication Department students of three universities in North Central Nigeria. The schools include; Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida University, Lapai, Niger State; Nasarawa State University, Keffi; University of Mkar, Benue State. The study considered only students in 300 Level and 400 Level, and this formed the sample frame. The population (sum total) from these institutions is 662.

The simple random sampling technique was used in the administration of questionnaires to respondents in the three universities as follows: First, stratified sampling was used, thus a total of 249 questionnaires were distributed to the institutions.

The sample size was calculated using Guilford and Fluchter formula for estimating sample size as presented below:

$$\frac{N}{1 + Q^2 N}$$

Where: N = Population size = 662

Q = alpha = 0.05

Thus, the sample size is 249

Secondly, simple random sampling technique was further adopted to select respondents from the three selected schools. 113 copies were distributed to students of the department of Mass Communication, Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida University, Lapai, 68 copies of the questionnaire were administered to students in the department

of Mass Communication, Nasarawa State University, Keffi, and the other 68 copies of the questionnaire were distributed to Mass Communication students of the University of Mkar, Benue State. It is also instructive to note that this study was carried out during the 2014/2015 academic session.

The data obtained from the study were analysed quantitatively in three stages: First, frequency table was used to analyse the demographic data and other questions that were framed in the questionnaire to elicit more information on the subject matter. Second, descriptive statistics (Mean and Standard Deviation), were used to analyse data on research objectives. While Chi Square was used to test the hypotheses of the study. All the analysis was done using SPSS 16.0 version.

Results and Analysis

A total of 249 questionnaires were administered, only 194 were returned. This represents 77.9% return rate. More so, out of the 194 that were returned, only 174 were filled correctly and used for the analysis, 20 were considered invalid.

Two items were used to examine the demographic features of respondents (see appendix i). This included: Gender and age bracket. The analysis shows that the majority of the respondents (53%) were females, while the remaining 47% were males. Similarly, the age distribution also shows that majority of the respondents are within the age bracket of 18 – 30 years (83.3%), while 12.6% were within 30 – 35 years. More so, 3.4% of them were within the age bracket of 41 – 50 years and only 0.6% was 51 years and above.

Furthermore, analysis of other questions that were framed in the questionnaire to elicit more information on the subject (see appendix ii) matter shows that 100% of the respondents affirmed that they use social media tools as a communication platform. Similarly, 68.4% respondents said they have personal profile on Face book which they constantly use. 14.4% have profile on Google, 4.0% on Twitter, 1.1% on MySpace, 2.3% on Flickr, 7.5% on Watt sap, 1.1% on LinkedIn, 0% on YouTube and 1.1% on Blogs.

On the eligibility of the respondents, it was observed that 86.8% of the respondents said they were eligible during the 2011 presidential election, while 26.4% claimed they used Google, 9.2% said Twitter, 0.6% said MySpace, 0.6% Flickr, 2.9% Watt sap, 0% on LinkedIn, 0% on YouTube and 2.91% used Blogs. The analysis further indicated that 43.1% of the respondents often use social media to get political information during the 2011 presidential election, 47.7% said very often, while 9% said rarely often.

While on their choice of presidential candidates, 45.5% of the respondents said they voted President Goodluck Jonathan, 48.3% said they voted General Mohamadu Buhari, while 6.3% of the respondents said they were not legible to vote during the

2011 presidential election. Also, 44.8% of the respondents affirmed that if a political candidate does not have a web page, they may be less likely to vote for them during election, while the remaining 55.2% of the respondents said no. In addition, 7.5% of the respondents said they were not eligible to vote during the 2011 presidential election. In addition, 23.0% said what influenced their decision to vote during the presidential election was based on political party consideration, 0.8% said political pedigree of the contestants, 14.4 said religious affiliation, 7.3% said ethnic consideration, while the remaining 6.9% voted base on the influence of social media use by the two presidential candidates.

As a follow-up question to question 13 which required respondents to explain which factor had the most influence on their decision to vote for the presidential candidates of their choice during the 2011 presidential election. Over 70% of the respondents admitted that they were motivated to vote for President Muhammad Buhari because of his unassailable record as past head of State. Furthermore, the respondents affirmed that they voted for him because he is a Northerner thus they feel obliged to support a presidential candidate from their geo-political zone. This clearly shows that the respondents were greatly influenced to vote for General Mohammad Buhari because of their ethnic affiliation. In addition, a considerable number of respondents also attested to the fact that Buhari's impeccable character of zero tolerance to corruption and a high sense of integrity endeared him to them. On the other hand, other respondents were of the opinion that they voted for President Goodluck Jonathan because of his religious affiliation. Some of the respondents said they were made to believe that General Mohammad Buhari is a religious fanatic, hence they were afraid if he is voted into power he will Islamize the country. A fraction of the respondents also said they voted President Goodluck Jonathan because of his political party (PDP) which has a strong structure and track record since the inception of the fourth republic in 1999.

Table 1 below presents the result of the descriptive statistics on the items that were used to measure objectives of the study. Analysis of the result indicates that majority of the respondents' choice of presidential candidate during the 2011 presidential election was influenced by the use of social media as indicated by high value of mean (1.5805). Similarly, a large number of respondents believed that the presidential candidates were popular because they used social media (mean value of 1.5575). Furthermore, the respondents affirmed that their voting pattern during the 2011 presidential election was influenced by social media usage as shown by high mean value (1.6667).

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics on Research Questions

	Mean	Std. Deviation
Was your choice of President Goodluck Jonathan/ General Muhammadu Buhari during the 2011 presidential election influenced by the use of social media?	1.5805	.59075
Do you think that the two presidential aspirants were popular because they utilized social media in their political campaigns?	1.5575	.49812
Was your voting pattern during the 2011 presidential election influenced by social media usage?	1.6667	.55175
Valid N (listwise)		

Source: Author’s Computation, 2015

Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis One: The first hypothesis was to test whether voter’s choice of political candidates in the 2011 presidential election was not influenced by political communication on social media. The results are presented in the tables below:

Table 2: Was your choice of President Goodluck Jonathan/ General Muhammadu Buhari during the 2011 presidential election influenced by the use of social media?

	Observed N	Expected N	Residual
Not Applicable	9	58.0	-49.0
Yes	55	58.0	-3.0
No	110	58.0	52.0
Total	174		

Source: Author’s Computation, 2015

Table 2 presents the result of the observed and expected frequency on whether or not the choice of presidential candidates of respondents was influenced by the use of social media. It was observed that only 55 of respondents affirmed that their choice was influenced by the use of social media, 110 respondents said no while 9 of the respondents indicated that they were not eligible to vote during the 2011 presidential election.

Table 3: Chi Square Statistics Table

	Was your choice of President Goodluck Jonathan/General Muhammadu Buhari during the 2011 presidential election influenced by the use of social media?
Chi-Square	88.172 ^a
Df	2
Asymp. Sig.	.000

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 58.

Source: Author's Computation, 2015

Table 3 presented the result of Chi square. The result shows that the value of chi-square calculated $X^2 = 88.172$ with the degree of freedom = 2, which is significant 0.000 at 1% level of significant. Therefore, based on the result (table 3), the null hypothesis is rejected and alternative is accepted. This means that voter's choice of political candidates in the 2011 presidential election was influenced by political communication on social media.

Hypothesis Two: The second hypothesis was formulated to test whether the popularity of the presidential candidates during the 2011 presidential election was as a result of social media usage. The results are presented in the tables below:

Table 4 below presents the result of the observed and expected frequency on whether or not the popularity of presidential candidates was as a result of the use of social media. A total of 77 respondents affirmed that the presidential candidates were popular because they used social media, while 97 respondents were of the opinion that presidential candidates' popularity was not linked to social media usage.

Table 4: Do you think that the two presidential aspirants were popular because they utilized social media in their political campaign?

	Observed N	Expected N	Residual
Yes	77	87.0	-10.0
No	97	87.0	10.0
Total	174		

Source: Author’s Computation, 2015

Table 5: Chi Square Statistics Table

Test Statistics

	Do you think that the two presidential aspirants were popular because they utilized social media in their political campaigns?
Chi-Square	2.299 ^a
Df	1
Asymp. Sig.	.129

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 87.0.

Source: Author’s Computation, 2015

Table 5 presents the result of chi square test statistics on whether the popularity of the presidential candidates during the 2011 presidential election was as a result of social media usage. The result shows the calculated value of chi square $X^2 = 2.299$ and the degree of freedom = 1, $0.129 > 0.01$., which is not significant Thus, based on the result above, we accept the null hypothesis and reject the alternative. This means that the popularity of Presidential aspirants in the 2011 general election has no significant relationship with their social media use during the election.

Hypothesis Three: The third hypothesis was formulated to test whether respondents’ voting pattern during the 2011 presidential election was influenced by the use of social media. The results are presented in the tables below:

Table 6: Was your voting pattern during the 2011 presidential election influenced by social media usage?

	Observed N	Expected N	Residual
Not Applicable	7	58.0	-51.0
Yes	44	58.0	-14.0
No	123	58.0	65.0
Total	174		

Source: Author's Computation, 2015

Table 6 presents the result of the observed and expected frequency on whether the voting pattern of respondents was influenced by the use of social media during the 2011 presidential election. It was found out that only 44 respondents affirmed that their voting pattern was influenced by the use of social media while 123 respondents said no. However, a total of 7 respondents indicated that they were not eligible to vote during the 2011 presidential election.

Table 7: Chi Square Statistics Table**Test Statistics**

	Was your voting pattern during the 2011 presidential election influenced by social media usage?
Chi-Square	121.069 ^a
Df	2
Asymp. Sig.	.000

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 58.0.

Source: Author's Computation, 2015

As presented in table 7 above, the result of the Chi square calculated $X^2 = 121.069$, and the degree of freedom = 2, being significant at 0.000 at 1% significant level. Based on the result as presented in the above table, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative accepted. This means that the electorate voting pattern during the 2011 elections was influenced by their exposure to political messages on social media.

Summary of Findings

Based on the analysis of the results, the following are the findings:

1. Most of the respondents (53.4%) are within the age bracket of 18 to 30 years of age.
2. Majority of the respondents (83.3%) are females and they very often use the social media to get political information during the 2011 presidential election.
3. Face book is the most utilized social media tool by the presidential candidates during the elections.
4. The first and third hypothesis were significant, thus the null hypotheses were rejected.
5. The second hypothesis was not significant, therefore the null hypothesis was accepted, while the alternative was rejected.

Implications of Findings

The findings of this study attest to the fact that majority of people who use social media to get political information are predominantly youths. The implication of this is that, more youths are now being mobilized to participate in the political process through the social media where their opinions and voices can be heard.

Voter's choice of political candidates during electioneering campaigns was to a greater extent influenced by politician's use of social media. However, respondents also affirmed that other factors such as political experience of a candidate, integrity, past records, achievements, and political affiliation (political party) were among the factors that influenced their voting pattern. The implication of this import is that apart from the social media, other intervening variables plays a greater role in the voting patterns of electorate during the elections. This reveals that voting pattern in Nigeria is influence by these factors.

Based on the findings of the study, Facebook ranked highest among the several social media platforms available to the electorate for political engagement during election campaigns. This, therefore, suggests that, for Nigerian politicians to remain relevant in contemporary politics, they have to utilize the social media so as to woo their supporters who are mostly young people.

With the emergence of social media, traditional means of political campaigns is gradually changing to modern means of communication. The implication of this is that politicians must acquaint themselves with this new paradigm shift if they must mobilize the youths in future elections.

Conclusion

In view of the findings of this study, it was concluded that social media have redefined the landscape of political communication in Nigeria. This phenomenal change is

brought about by development of new media technologies such as the internet and other social media platforms. Political candidates now use these communication platforms to engage with the electorate during political campaign. The electorate on the other hand, finds these tools very effective to connect with their political representatives or candidates as it is the only medium that gives them free and unlimited access to stay connected with happenings in the political sphere.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the researchers, therefore, made the following recommendations:

1. Nigerian politicians should continue to use the social media to engage the electorate during political campaigns especially the youth who are avid users of the social media.
2. Based on the findings of this study, Facebook is the most utilized social media platform by the presidential candidates. The study therefore recommends that in future elections, other social media platforms likes YouTube, Instagram, and Blogs should be employed by politicians during electioneering campaigns.
3. Nigerian electorate should ensure that their voting pattern in future elections should not be influenced by political candidate's religious affiliations or ethnic considerations but on the credibility of candidates.

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