

THE MANAGEMENT OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN THE POLITICS OF EDO STATE

Mgbonyebi Voke Charles Ph.D & Umerah Ezenwani Stephen

Email: voke.mgbonyebi@unidel.edu.ng, stephen.umerah@unidel.edu.ng

University of Delta, Agbor Delta State Nigeria

ABSTRACT

This study examines social media management in Edo State, Nigeria, emphasizing its function as a vital instrument for political involvement, mobilization, and communication. Social media is becoming more and more popular, and politicians and political parties are using it to interact with voters, share information, and sway public opinion. The study looks at the tactics used by political players to control their online personas, how social media affects voting patterns, and the difficulties posed by disinformation and digital divisions. This study shows that good social media management may increase political exposure and promote democratic engagement through both qualitative and quantitative assessments. But it also highlights important issues, such as the proliferation of false information and the requirement that voters to be digitally literate. The results highlight the need for thorough social media regulations and education initiatives to empower both citizens and political players. This study advances our knowledge of how social media and politics interact in Edo State and provides guidance for future election tactics and governance.

KEYWORDS: Management, Social Media, Governance, Politics, Political Parties and voters.

INTRODUCTION

This study examines how social media is used in Edo State politics as social media has become a potent and significant instrument in today's global political environments. its effect on communication in politics. Public opinion and mobilization have been very important. Nigeria, the most populous nation in Africa and one of its biggest democracies, has seen significant changes. Without a doubt, the 2023 Nigerian presidential election saw fierce political campaigns and competition between numerous contenders for the nation's top job. The goal of this research is to carry out a thorough case study investigating how politics and social media interface during the Nigerian presidential election of 2023. Social media has taken on a more significant role in Nigerian politics, particularly in the run-up to the national elections. By exploring this subject, we hope to comprehend how social media platforms are dynamic and how they impact political discourse. formation of public opinion. as well as Nigerian voters' actions. Due to greater internet penetration and smartphone accessibility, social media usage has skyrocketed in Nigeria during the last ten years. Aday, S. et al. (2012) Social media sites like Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, and Twitter have become widely used platforms for political participation. enabling communication between citizens. They interact with political parties and leaders and voice their ideas. By facilitating public engagement and allowing previously underrepresented perspectives to be heard, these platforms have democratized political discourse. But there are drawbacks to social media's ascent in Nigerian politics. The political process and societal cohesion have been seriously threatened by the proliferation of hate speech, fake news, and disinformation on these platforms. Social media turns become a battlefield for opposing viewpoints during election campaigns, as political figures and their followers engage in heated online arguments, disinformation tactics, and propaganda. Social media can therefore both help and impede the dissemination of accurate and trustworthy information that is required to make well-informed voting decisions. Anstead, N. (2017) The 2023 Nigerian presidential election, which was fiercely contested and politically fraught, is the specific subject of this case study. It looks at the methods and approaches used on social media by presidential candidates and their campaigns.

Additionally, this study investigates how social media affects voting patterns and political outcomes. It looks into how social media use during election season affects voter choices, public opinion, and possibly election results by analyzing the role of social media. Finding patterns, trends, and new phenomena that provide insight into the changing dynamic between social media and Nigerian politics is our goal during the elections. social media's impact on political outcomes and voter behavior. It looks on the ways that social media use during election season affects voter choices, public opinion, and possibly election results. Bimber, B. (2014) However, this study offers important insight into the shifting dynamics of political communication in Nigeria by analyzing how social media and conventional media shape the information ecology.

The Research Problem Statement

In today's world, the relationship between politics and social media in Edo State offers both tremendous opportunities and challenges. Social media's explosive growth has revolutionized political communication, altering election results and public opinion. Social media's ease of information sharing has, however, facilitated the propagation of misleading narratives that have the potential to deceive voters and threaten democratic processes. Social media algorithms frequently produce "echo chambers," which serve to reinforce preexisting opinions and exacerbate political division. Chadwick, A. (2017). This can obstruct productive discourse and compromise. Social media can be used by political organizations to sway public opinion through coordinated campaigns and targeted advertising, which raises moral questions regarding responsibility and transparency. Platforms and users face difficulties due to unclear laws governing data protection and content filtering, which sparks discussions about the necessity for responsible management and the right to free speech. Social media can increase political participation, but it can also drive other groups away, resulting in unequal representation in political debate. Boulianne, S. (2015). To ensure that social media is a vehicle for inclusive and informed political engagement, addressing these concerns calls for a comprehensive strategy involving the public, social media corporations, and legislators. This study examines how social media and politics interact during the 2023 Nigerian presidential election by looking into the tactics used by candidates, evaluating the effects on public opinion and voter behavior, and evaluating the opportunities and problems presented by social media in the Nigerian setting. In the Nigerian context, the growing impact of social media on politics offers both opportunities and challenges for comprehending the function of social media in Nigerian politics and its role in establishing strong and inclusive democratic processes in the nation. Breuer, A. et al. (2015) Social media platforms can promote dialogue, increase political engagement, and make information easier to share, but they also help propagate false information that divides people's opinions. and compromise the integrity of the democratic process, so the study's research problem is to examine how social media affects Nigerian politics, specifically the 2023 presidential election, in order to comprehend its effects on voter behavior, public opinion formation, and political communications.

Research Questions

- i. How much did social media affect voters' perceptions during the 2023 presidential election?
- ii. How did social media affect the way people voted in the Nigerian presidential election of 2023?
- iii. How much did voter mobilization and political engagement during the 2023 presidential elections depend on social media campaigns?
- iv. How did the democratic process and election results during the 2023 presidential elections get affected by the dissemination of false information and hate speech on social media?

Objective of the study

- i. To assess the degree to which voters' opinions are influenced by social media during the 2023 presidential election.
- ii. To evaluate how social media may affect voting patterns in the Nigerian presidential election of 2023.
- iii. To assess how much social media efforts have impacted voter mobilization and political engagement in the 2023 presidential elections
- iv. To determine the effects of hate speech and disinformation propagation on social media on the democratic process and election results in the 2023 presidential election.

Research Hypotheses

- i. Voters' opinions and social media influences in the 2023 presidential election do not significantly correlate.
- ii. The influence of social media on voting behavior in the 2023 elections is not significantly correlated with election outcomes.
- iii. Social media campaigns have no discernible impact on voter political engagement or mobilization in the 2023 presidential election.
- iv. The outcome of the 2023 presidential election has no discernible bearing on the dissemination of hate speech and disinformation.

Significance of the study

It is essential to comprehend the relationship between social media and politics in light of the Nigerian presidential election in 2023 for a number of reasons. First of all, it will advance our knowledge of the political scene in Nigeria and add to the body of knowledge already available on the impact of social media on political processes. Second, political candidates and parties will get important insights that will help them create social media plans that work and interact with the elections in a more calculated way. Thirdly, it will educate regulators and policymakers about possible measures to counteract hate speech and other harmful impacts of social media while maintaining the democratic potential of these platforms.

Scope of the study

The purpose of this study is to investigate how social media affects Nigerian politics in the particular setting of Benin City, Edo State. Understanding how social media affects voter perception, political engagement, and the spread of political information among Edo State inhabitants is the main goal of the study. The study aims to shed light on the dynamics and impacts of social media platforms on political processes in Benin City by investigating the role of social media in Nigerian politics. Residents of Benin City in a variety of demographic categories, including as age, gender, socioeconomic status, educational background, and political affiliation, make up the research participants in this study. Surveys will be used to gather information about participants' opinions, experiences, and actions about social media's influence on Nigerian politics.

The study aims to contribute to the existing knowledge on the impact of social media on political engagement and democratic process in Benin City, thereby providing valuable insights for policymakers, researchers, and stakeholders in the region

Limitations of The Study

A notable constraint of this study is the possibility of selection bias in the information gathered from social media sites. An insufficient comprehension of the wider sentiment and viewpoints surrounding the 2023 Nigerian presidential elections may result from the analysis's heavy reliance on publicly available content, which may not fully reflect the range of political discourse and engagement. More active social media users or those with specific ideological learning may be overrepresented in the data. Additionally, this constraint may limit the study's potential to collect nuanced opinions that

exist outside of the arena of social media interaction and may impair the findings' ability to be generalized to the majority of voters.

Operational Clarification of Terms

Social media: For the purposes of this study, social media refers to websites and digital platforms that let users create, share, and engage with material, such as text, photos, videos, and links. Social media sites include YouTube, WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. The political environment, procedures, and events that take place within the nation's democratic systems are referred to as Nigerian politics: These include election campaigns, political parties, candidates, voter behavior, public opinion, and the general dynamics of political engagement and decision-making.

Hate Speech: Any verbal, written, or symbolic communication that disparages, threatens, or incites violence against people or groups on the basis of characteristics like race, ethnicity, religion, nationality, gender, or sexual orientation is considered hate speech. or other traits, it entails the use of words or expressions that incite animosity, hatred, or prejudice toward a specific person or group.

Voter perceptions: it views, attitudes, and convictions that each voter has about political parties, candidates, and issues. Political Mobilization and participation: political Mobilization encompasses efforts to engage

DEFINITION OF TERMS

SOCIAL MEDIA AND PUBLIC OPINION OF VOTERS IN NIGERIA

Nigerian politics have changed as a result of social media platforms, which have a big impact on how voters form their opinions. The public's reaction to social media It is impossible to overstate political opinions, attitudes, and beliefs. Social media platforms give Nigerians a forum to voice their opinions and participate in political debates, as well as to shape political discourse and opinions about candidates and issues. Voters' public opinion formation has been altered by social media platforms. Aday, S. et al. (2012) asserts that platforms like Twitter have a significant role in influencing public discourse and political narrative by facilitating the quick dissemination of information and amplifying particular viewpoints, which in turn shapes how the public views topics and politicians.

According to Anstead, N. (2017), Howard P. et al. (2019), social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter are essential for disseminating political news, campaign updates, and policy positions. Nigerian voters depend on these platforms to stay informed and form their opinions about political candidates and issues. Social media platforms also give Nigerian citizens a forum to express their views, participate in political discourse, and take part in civic activities. According to Bennett, W.L. and Segerberg, A. (2012), social media has the ability to promote public discourse and civic involvement. Social media platforms are used by Nigerian voters to express their opinions, contest political narratives, and participate in public debates.

Nigerian voters' public opinion development has also been impacted by the rise of social media influences. Influencers use information sharing, endorsements, and persuasive content to influence public opinions about political candidates and issues thanks to their sizable internet following. Bimber, B. (2014) investigate how social media affects public opinion and political campaigns in Nigeria. Social media's impact on Nigerian public opinion brings up ethical issues and the necessity of responsible use. To combat the spread of false information and advance informed public opinion, academics and policymakers stress the value of media literacy, critical thinking, and fact-checking initiatives. To guarantee the moral and responsible use of social media platforms in political discourse, regulations and rules are also required.

SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCE ON VOTERS BEHAVIOR

Voter behavior is significantly influenced by social media sites. Voters' attitudes, political participation, assessments of candidates, and voting decisions are all influenced by it. Social media's

effects on agenda-setting, knowledge dissemination, social impact, and the possibility of echo Chambers plays a crucial role in comprehending the intricate relationships between social media and voter behavior, highlighting the necessity of media literacy and critical analysis in navigating the digital political environment. Voters' exposure to political information and agenda-setting are greatly influenced by social media platforms. According to Chadwick, A. (2017) social media allow users to follow particular political themes, which influences the concerns they prioritize. Social media algorithms and user self-selection help to personalize the information that is presented to voters, which may expose them to different viewpoints or reinforce preexisting opinions.

Voters can obtain and verify political information in a completely different way thanks to social media. In order to combat false information on social media platforms, Bimber, B. (2014) stress the significance of media literacy and fact-checking initiatives. Voter's ability to critically analyze information and discern between truthful and fraudulent claims is vital in molding their behavior. Voter behavior can be greatly impacted by social influence and peer-to-peer communication, which are made possible by social media platforms. According to Bennett, W.L. and Segerberg, A. (2012), social networks have the ability to mobilize voters and influence political engagement. Social media enables users to exchange political content, participate in debates, and get peer recommendations, all of which have the ability to influence users' opinions and how they view themselves. According to Boulianne, S. (2015) voters' opinions of a candidate's likeability, credibility, and dependability might be influenced by their social media profiles. Election success can be greatly impacted by a candidate's strategic use of social media platforms to connect with voters and present themselves. Echo Chambers, where users are mostly exposed to like-minded viewpoints, have been linked to social media and have the potential to further polarize politics. Anstead, N. (2017) underlines the significance of social media algorithms in producing filter bubbles and limiting exposure to varied opinions. The presence of echo chambers can influence voters' behavior by reducing their access to critical analysis and information on social media. Platforms frequently use tales, visual content, and persuasive strategies to elicit emotional reactions from users. According to Aday, S. et al. (2012), voters' attitudes and choices may be influenced by the feelings they experience when consuming political news on social media. Voters' perceptions of politicians and topics can be shaped by emotional appeals and persuasive messaging, which can influence how they behave at the polls.

SOCIAL MEDIA AND POLITICAL CAMPAIGNS

Political players now have new ways to engage with voters and influence public opinion thanks to social media platforms, which have completely changed the political scene. Social media sites are now vital resources for political campaigns looking to interact with voters and spread information. Social media gives candidates the ability to communicate with voters directly, exchange campaign messaging, and reach a wider audience, according to Aday, S. et al. (2012), Okonkwo, U. and Amaechi N. C. (2021) Social media sites like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter offer real-time updates, enabling campaigns to customize their messaging and react quickly to changing political conditions. Social media platforms are essential for increasing grassroots participation and candidate visibility. Anstead, N. (2017) draws attention to the ways in which social media sites like YouTube and Instagram have the potential to dehumanize candidates and highlight their personal narratives. Applicants and a Leverage.

Social media platforms have transformed donor engagement and campaign fundraising tactics by enabling more intimate connections with voters through the sharing of behind-the-scenes content and the encouragement of relatability, both of which can favorably affect voters' impressions. Strengthen and enjoy According to Aday, S. et al. (2012), social media campaigns have gathered financial support from a wider range of donors when paired with crowd funding platforms and focused fundraising efforts. Although candidates can use social media to build relationships with donors, share fundraising appeals, and more effectively collect donations, using social media in political campaigns presents ethical questions and difficulties. It is important to pay close attention to the dissemination of false information, the possibility of algorithmic biases, and privacy problems.

In political campaigns, Breuer, A., et al. (2015) stress the significance of openness, responsibility, and social media platform usage.

SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE SPREAD OF MISINFORMATION AND HATE SPEECH

The propagation of misinformation on social media has emerged as a key challenge to democratic discourse. This section examines the mechanisms that underlie the dissemination of false information, the elements that make it effective, and the consequences for democratic processes, public opinion, and political campaigns. It emphasizes the difficulties presented by false information and possible methods to lessen its effects, drawing on pertinent studies. Social media platforms have contributed to the phenomenon known as "information disorder" by speeding up the dissemination of false information. According to Breuer, A., et al. user-generated material, echo chambers, and social media algorithms all contribute to the spread of misleading information. Social media's viral nature can cause false information to spread quickly, casting doubt on the veracity and accuracy of information sources. Political efforts are often hampered by misinformation. Pennycook, G. (2019).

Anstead, N. et al. (2017) show how social media misinformation campaigns can sway voters' opinions, affect election results, and compromise the integrity of democratic processes. To combat false narratives and preserve the integrity of their messaging, political candidates and campaigns must negotiate the misinformation landscape. Social media misinformation has the power to skew public opinion and influence how political issues are seen. On social media platforms, incorrect information travels more quickly and widely than genuine information, according to Bimber, B. (2014). The spread of false information has the power to skew perceptions and affect public opinion. Misinformation on social media is effective due to a number of variables. According to Chadwick, A. (2017), cognitive biases including motivated reasoning and confirmation bias might increase a person's susceptibility to false information.

A diversified strategy is needed to combat the dissemination of false information. Media literacy programs, fact-checking groups, and cooperation between social media companies, researchers, and policymakers are crucial, according to Bimber, B. (2014). Fostering critical thinking, delivering correct information, and enhancing digital literacy can assist people in recognizing and combating false information.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The objective of this conceptual framework is to offer a thorough understanding of the relationship between social media and politics, with a particular focus on the 2023 Nigerian presidential election. It examines the major factors that impact the dynamics between social media and political processes during the election campaign period. The framework includes a number of elements, such as social media platforms, political actors, election outcomes, voter public opinion, voter political mobilization, voter behavior, political campaigns, and the dissemination of misinformation. It highlights the interactions and interdependencies among these factors, highlighting their effects on Nigeria's electoral landscape and democratic process.

SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS

During Nigeria's 2023 presidential elections, social media platforms will have a significant impact on how social media and politics interact. These platforms act as the communication conduits and technical framework that support political discourse, information sharing, and public participation. To understand how social media platforms affect political processes, one must be aware of its features and influence Bimber, B. (2014). Due to their extensive reach and accessibility, social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube give political actors the chance to interact directly with voters, share policy positions, and spread their messages. In Nigeria, these platforms have millions of active users.

Social media platforms' capacity to reach a wide range of people helps democratize political communication by facilitating greater involvement and engagement in the political process Bimber, B. (2014), Chadwick, A. (2017), & Anstead, N. et al. (2017), Omotola, J. S. (2019). One characteristic that sets social media platforms apart is the important role that user-generated content plays. Users have the agency to produce and disseminate their own political content, opinions, and experiences. Political debates, posts about campaigns, multimedia, and personal recommendations are a few examples of this type of material. Social media platforms facilitate interaction and engagement between political actors and voters, and user-generated content adds to the diversity of political discourse by allowing for a variety of perspectives and encouraging grassroots engagement

Real-time Facebook conversation and conversations are made possible by interactive elements like likes, shares, retweets, and comments. Political Resolving issues and compiling Facebook, Social media's interactive features make political campaigns more approachable and responsive while encouraging a sense of involvement and connection between voters and political actors Bimber, B. (2014), Chadwick, A. (2017), & Anstead, N. et al. (2017). Political players can reach particular electoral segments thanks to social media platforms' advanced targeting features. Campaigns can maximize the impact of their campaigns and mobilization strategies by focusing their resources and efforts on key voter groups through targeted advertising and micro targeting, which allows them to customize their messages, advertisements, and content to specific demographics, interests, and geographic locations.

Political actors can better understand their audience, hone their message tactics, and gauge the success of their campaigns with the use of social media platforms' comprehensive data analysis and analytics. Campaigns may track user interaction, keep an eye on trends, and learn more about voter preferences and behavior by using analysis tools. Based on real-time input, this data-driven strategy helps political players make better strategic decisions and maximize their campaign efforts Bimber, B. (2014), Chadwick, A. (2017), & Anstead, N. et al. (2017), Enjorias, B. et al., (2019), Social media platforms' capacity for content amplification and vibrancy is another unique quality. When political content strikes a chord with consumers, it can quickly go viral and reach a large audience. For political actors looking to maximize their reach and influence, it is essential to influence public opinion during political campaigns, the electoral landscape as a whole, and content that connects with users and capitalizes on social media platforms' viral potential Bimber, B. (2014), Chadwick, A. (2017), Ibrahim, A and Adamu A. (2023). In order to increase their visibility and mold their public image, political players use social media platforms to interact with voters directly, share personal narratives, and articulate their policy stances. According to Anstead, N. (2017), political actors can craft a positive and relatable image that appeals to the electorate by producing and selecting information that supports their campaign narrative. Social media platforms give political players a direct line of communication for sharing their policy suggestions and campaign messages.

Posts, tweets, videos, and live streams allow political actors to reach a large audience without going through the gatekeepers of traditional media. Social media's amplification and sharing capabilities allow supporters to Anstead, N. (2017). Social media platforms allow for direct communication between voters and political actors. Political actors can communicate with voters by answering their questions, addressing their concerns, and taking part in online debates. According to Anstead, N. et al. (2017) political actors can cultivate a feeling of inclusivity and engagement in the political process, as well as generate personal ties and trust, by actively engaging with the electorate. Political players mobilize supporters and promote grassroots movements through social media platforms.

By using social media to plan events, rallies, and volunteer opportunities, they may encourage greater involvement and participation. Furthermore, political actors can directly solicit financial support from their fans by using the crowdfunding possibilities and fundraising tools provided by social media platforms. Bimber, B. (2014), Chadwick, A. (2017), & Anstead, N. et al. (2017), Oluyemi, O. et al., (2020). Taking part in discussions online. According to Anstead, N. et al. (2017) political actors can cultivate a sense of inclusivity and engagement in the political process, as well as generate personal ties and trust, by actively engaging with the electorate. Political players mobilize

supporters and promote grassroots movements through social media platforms. By using social media to plan events, rallies, and volunteer opportunities, they may encourage greater involvement and participation. Also, social media Engaging in virtual conversations, Political actors can develop personal relationships, trust, and a sense of inclusivity and political engagement by actively interacting with the electorate. In order to mobilize followers and promote grassroots movements, political players use social media platforms to plan events, demonstrations, and volunteer opportunities. This allows for greater participation and engagement. Furthermore, social media platforms include crowdfunding choices and fundraising tools, enabling political actors to directly solicit financial support from their fans. Political actors use social media platforms' microtargeting features to customize their messaging for particular voter demographics. Political actors can gain a deeper understanding of the preferences, interests, and behaviors of their target audience by leveraging the data analytics and insights offered by these platforms.

They can use this information to improve their outreach efforts, maximize the effectiveness of their messaging tactics, and optimize campaign resources. Social media platforms give political players a forum to handle crises, address disputes, and influence public opinion. By communicating in real time on social media, political players can quickly resolve problems, offer clarifications, and steer the conversation. This aids in reducing the effects of unfavorable incidents and controlling the public conversation about their campaign Bimber, B. (2014), Chadwick, A. (2017), & Anstead, N. et al. (2017). Political players actively interact with social media influencers and look for endorsements to increase their visibility and legitimacy; influencers with a sizable fan base can greatly influencing public opinion by sponsoring political actors, sharing their information, and engaging in discussions, political actors strategically Work together with influencers to broaden their audience and reach particular voting categories, In order to understand the dynamics of political campaigns and their effects on public opinion during Nigeria's 2023 presidential elections, it is essential to comprehend the strategies and tactics used by political players on social media platforms.

ELECTIONRESULTS

Election results are a key determinant of social media's effect and influence on Nigeria's 2023 presidential election. These results cover a wide range of topics, such as the victorious candidate, voter turnout, public opinion, and the general effect on democratic procedures. Assessing the success of political campaigns, the degree of public participation, and the wider ramifications for the democratic system all depend on an understanding of the connection between social media and election results. Candidates who successfully use social media to spread their message, engage with voters, and rally support may have a competitive edge. Social media platforms can impact candidates' electoral success by influencing public opinion, rallying supporters, and extending their reach.

By examining election out results, one can examine the association between social media participation, popular mood and the performance of political candidates Bimber, B. (2014), Chadwick, A. (2017), & Anstead, N. et al. (2017) Social media platforms can have a positive or bad effect on voting turnout. They can be an effective political mobilization tool that encourages people to cast ballots. Political actors can utilize social media to reach potential voters and encourage them to vote by coordinating events, sending tailored messages, and running online campaigns. The relationship between voter turnout, mobilization activities, and social media involvement can be better understood by examining election results.

Election results can be influenced by social media's impact on public opinion. Social media platforms allow people to voice their thoughts, participate in political debates, and share their personal stories. Public statements made on social media throughout the election season can be analyzed to reveal the general sentiment, problems of concern, and possible influence on voting patterns and election results Aday, S. et al. (2012), Chawick, A, et al. (2018) Social media platforms influence public opinion, mobilize supporters, and magnify particular storylines, all of which help to shape the larger election landscape.

Social media, political players, and voter participation can all have an impact on how competitive the election is, how new political forces develop, and how old party structures are reorganized. Evaluating election results can help determine how much social media has influenced the dynamics and makeup of the political environment. Beyond just affecting specific candidates or parties, social media can have a wider impact on democratic processes, such as election transparency, citizen participation, and the general well-being of the democratic system.

An examination of election results can reveal information about how well social media works as a tool for political engagement, how it affects public confidence in institutions, and how it affects the legitimacy and accountability of elected officials. Social media's involvement and impact on Nigeria's 2023 presidential elections can be better understood by researchers, policymakers, and stakeholders by examining the election results in light of social media influence. Future election strategies, policies, and interventions that aim to capitalize on social media's positive aspects while addressing the risks and challenges related to its use in the political arena can be informed by the analysis.

VOTERS' PERCEPTION OF THE PUBLIC

A key factor in the political process, including the Nigerian presidential election of 2023, is voter sentiment. These days, social media platforms are powerful venues for the creation, expression, and sharing of public opinion. Regarding voter sentiment and its connection to social media, the following are some important points to think about: Voters have access to a variety of viewpoints and information through social media platforms. Users can interact with and follow a variety of sources, such as other voters, political actors, and citizen journalists.

This exposure to different points of view can influence how public opinion is formed by giving people a more comprehensive grasp of political topics and candidates. Aday, S. et al. (2012), Chadwick A. (2017) Voters may communicate and engage directly thanks to social media sites. Users are able to comment to other people's viewpoints, participate in discussions, and express their own. Voters can voice their opinions, share ideas, and support or oppose opposing views because to social media's participatory aspect. It helps explain why public opinion development is dynamic and ever-changing. By emphasizing particular problems, occasions, or stories, social media platforms help to shape the public agenda. These platforms' conversations and popular subjects have the power to shape voters' perceptions of what matters in the political debate.

The relevance and prioritizing of political themes can be impacted by social media's agenda-setting function. Social media platforms allow material, such as emotive appeals and viral messages, to spread quickly. Public opinion can be shaped by memes, videos, and emotive narratives that elicit strong emotional reactions. This type of content can affect voters' attitudes, perceptions, and decision-making processes. Social media content's emotional appeal occasionally takes precedence over thoughtful policy debates and logical decision-making. Social networking sites have the potential to create "echo chambers," where users are largely exposed to others who share their opinions and information that supports those opinions.

Social media algorithms and user behavior can contribute to the establishment and reinforcement of echo chambers, which can result in the polarization of public opinion, the reinforcement of preexisting prejudices, and a lack of exposure to alternative perspectives. In 2016, social impact platforms give celebrities and opinion leaders a platform to voice their opinions and influence public opinion. By supporting candidates, disseminating political content, and organizing their followers, these individuals can significantly influence voters. Their popularity, credibility, and persuasive skills can also influence voter attitudes and behavior.

This phenomenon can result in the polarization of public opinion, the reinforcement of previous biases, and a lack of exposure to different viewpoints. Echo chambers can be created and reinforced by social media algorithms and user activity. By supporting candidates, disseminating political content, and organizing their followers, social impact platforms give celebrities and opinion leaders a platform to voice their opinions and influence public opinion. Their popularity, credibility, and persuasive skills can influence public opinion and voter attitudes and behavior. It is crucial to

remember that, despite their capacity to influence public opinion, social media platforms do not fully capture the range of offline contacts in terms of popular mood. conventional media. and additional elements also play a part in the public opinion information. Additionally, it is difficult to capture a cohesive viewpoint due to the diversity and volatility of public opinion. During Nigeria's 2023 presidential elections, scholars and analysts must use rigorous methodologies to examine how public opinion is formed and how it interacts with social media.

POLITICAL CAMPAIGNS

Social media platforms have a significant impact on political campaigns, which are a crucial part of the electoral process in Nigeria's 2023 presidential elections. The activities and tactics used by political actors to further their candidacy, interact with voters, and mobilize support are all included in these campaigns. Political actors can directly communicate their campaign messages to a large audience through social media platforms. Candidates and political parties can use social media to share campaign events, discuss policies, and interact with voters in real time. This is because social media platforms make it simple to share content, campaigns can quickly reach a larger audience. Because social media platforms have sophisticated targeting features, political players can customize their messages for particular voter demographics.

By using demographic, regional, and interest-based targeting, campaigns can tailor their content to appeal to particular voter demographics. Maximizing the relevance and efficacy of campaign communications is the goal of this focused communication strategy Aday, S. et al. (2012). Voter mobilization during political campaigns is greatly aided by social media platforms. Social media can be used by campaigns to increase voter turnout, mobilize support, and promote voter registration. Social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter allow political actors to directly connect with individual voters, facilitating grassroots engagement. These platforms also help campaigns plan events, interact with supporters, and share campaign updates, which in turn fosters a sense of community and voter involvement. Campaigns can interact with voters on social media by sending them tailored messages and answering their queries and worries.

The interactive aspect of social media platforms enhances the accessibility and responsiveness of political campaigns. Social media platforms give options for political campaigns to generate funds and receive donations, campaigns can exploit social media features such as donations buttons, crowdfunding, and customized fundraising appeals mobilize financial assistance from their followers. Campaigns can use these platforms to attract a larger donor base and streamline the donation process. During political campaigns, social media platforms have emerged as driving forces behind grassroots movements and online activity. They make it possible for citizens to plan and coordinate their activities. disseminate information about initiatives and encourage group action. Online petitions, user-generated content, and hashtags can all help spread the word about a campaign, rally supporters, and build momentum.

SUMMARY

Using the 2023 presidential election as a case study, this study explores the function of social media in Nigerian politics. Political parties, candidates, and grassroots organizations used social media's reach and virility to plan rallies, advance policy agendas, and boost voter turnout, according to the study, which also showed that social media platforms were useful tools for political mobilization and lobbying. Rallies and the ease of information sharing support policy agendas and boost voting turnout. The ease with which information can be shared and support may be mobilized online helps to raise citizens' political knowledge and engagement.

CONCLUSION

An excellent example of how social media shapes political conversation, public opinion, and engagement was the 2023 Nigerian presidential election. The study emphasized social media platforms' advantages and disadvantages in the political sphere. As Nigeria continues its democratic

transition, a thorough grasp of how social media and politics interact will be crucial to encouraging informed and engaged voter turnout in subsequent elections.

RECOMMENDATION

Enhancing and developing educational programs and initiatives to enhance media literacy among citizens, helping them critically examine material and spot disinformation on social media. Actions to Verify the Facts: Work together with independent fact-checking groups to confirm and disprove false information that is spreading on social media sites so that the public is exposed to correct information. The algorithm Transparency: Promote greater openness in social media companies' algorithms to guarantee that users are exposed to a range of opinions and to prevent echo chambers from forming.

However, Digital Civility campaigns that discourage hate speech, personal assaults, and objectionable information on social media and encourage polite and civil conversation. Platform Regulation: Work with oversight organizations to create and implement policies that stop hate speech, fake news, and disinformation from spreading on social media. Real-Time Monitoring: Use real-time monitoring methods to quickly detect and respond to hate speech and disinformation incidents, reducing their influence on public conversation.

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