



Adoption Of Social Media-Based Political Campaigns Among Political Aspirants for The Local Government Chairmanship Elections In Oyo State

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Abstract

The intensive use of social media for social activities establishes its indispensability in the political terrains. The wide adoption of social media for political and electioneering campaigns confirms new perspectives about the social and political functions of the mass media. Consequently, the paper is designed to investigate the use social media for political campaigns by Political aspirants for the Local Government Chairmanship election in Oyo State. A mixed-method was adopted to guide the study. Descriptive survey method and in-depth were used to guide the study. Descriptive survey method enables the researcher to access the opinions, attitudes, and thinking of the respondents that are very large. In-depth interview enables the researchers to have access to a few respondents who have detailed knowledge and informed views on subject matters under investigation. Findings showed that political aspirants who use the social media to campaign on social media only post pictures because it breaks illiteracy barriers among educated and the uneducated. Findings also showed that surging population of youths who are the main users of social media and major voters in an election has forced many politicians to register their presence on social media. Therefore, it is recommended that a unit must be established in any political party organisation to oversee social media activities of their political party candidates. As the users of social media keep increasing every day, there must be a course in secondary schools in Oyo State, and by extension Nigeria, to train the youths on informed and proper use of social media not only to benefit users but also to use the medium to bring about good governance and accountable leadership in Oyo State and Nigeria.



Keywords: Social Media, Political Campaigns, Political Aspirants, Local Government Chairmanship, Election

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1. Introduction

Communication technology has caused society to experience a new dimension in the way political messages and other forms of information are shared (Kartasmita et al., 2023). Social media platform is a powerful influence on political opinions and beliefs. Electioneering campaigns in most African states are becoming social media debates, enabling the voters to decide which candidate and political party to vote for or against. Social media is adopted by political candidates to build a preferred image in the perception of the members of the public (Zuhdi et al., 2023). For political actors, social media is the most effective platform to court voters' support. However, if not well handled, social media can destroy the image of political candidates and the political parties with which they are affiliated. Politics and political issues have become social media affairs globally (Syahira et al., 2023). Globally, social media has become crucial to electoral victory or defeat. Nigerians use social media for educational, entertainment, information, political, social and financial purposes (Syahira et al., 2023). Social media has a great influence on politics and political agenda before, during and after electioneering campaigns, enabling voters to ask relevant questions and evaluate those to represent them in government (Duche-Perez et al., 2023). Social media has changed previous perceptions of electioneering campaigns. The battle for political acceptance by political actors bring political contentions among political office seekers on social media (Syahira et al., 2023).

Social media has become an inevitable means of political, economic, socio-cultural information sharing in Nigeria (Kowal, 2023). The relationship between social media and politics have been a symbiotic one all over the world. Pre-election, election and post-election period periods witness different perspectives, debates, arguments and counter-arguments of political opponents, political aspirants and the electorates on social media. Social media has become the virtual public campaign field and the podium for the electorate to examine the political aspirants (Rizk et al., 2023). Contemporary political process cannot be complete in the absence of social media platform for opinion-sharing, information-giving and a landscape for electorates to scrutinise the candidates and their proposals (Diaz et



al., 2023). Social media has been adopted for election-related campaigns, most especially twitter. The era of communication technology has altered the previous political campaigns and electoral debates between political aspirants and the citizens (Febriana et al., 2023). The intensive use of social media for social activities establishes its indispensability in the political terrains. The wide adoption of social media for political and electioneering campaigns confirms new perspective about the social and political functions of the media (Vecchio-Lima et al., 2023).

Social media technology has provided platforms for political communications and exchange of political views between politicians and the citizens. Social media-based political campaigns have made the politics system and political aspirants to the virtual market of social media for robust discussions (Bastian et al., 2023). Social media has given voices to politically oppressed and the voiceless in the society. Politicians, political aspirants, and citizens have used social media to share opinions and views about political parts, political aspirants and electoral campaigns (Tiwari and Singh, 2023). Social media has become key to the way voters and political actors plan and coordinate electoral campaigns (Fisher et al., 2023). Social media and politics have become conjoined twins, playing crucial roles in the global political discourses due to its hallmarks of flexibility, ubiquity, immediacy, pervasiveness and interactivity. Social media-based political communication aims to form political images, deliver political messages to local or national audience, and to influence the opinions of the electorates (Lestari et al., 2023). Politicians and political parties have engaged social media for the spread of political messages because social media is not paid for, free from media-gate-keeping and has the capability to reach a larger population of the audience than conventional media of communication, irrespective of socio-economic classes (Lestari et al., 2023). Interactive communication between politicians and citizens offered by social media has increased civic engagement in Nigeria (Lestari et al., 2023).

Before elections every four years in Nigeria, politicians and citizens are more active on social media (Peeters et al., 2023). By facilitating a two-way communication process, social media has empowered people to participate in the democratic process (Faradis et al., 2023). Since conventional media have failed people with regard to holding government accountable to the citizens, citizens use social media to hold the government accountable and to keep government officials on their toes. While social media enables the politicians to build certain image for themselves and their political parties, social media offers the platform for political contestants to blackmail and defame one another.



Youths between the age of 18-45 make up 70% of voters in Nigeria (Murayama et al., 2023). The use of social media for election campaigns has been beneficial to political actors. Political actors use social media to inform, mobilise, interact with voters and use it to declare political manifestoes and aspirations (Murayama et al., 2023). Furaqan et al., (2023) aver that social media is empowering the youths to become more politically conscious and active. Many political actors and youths are benefitting from the offerings of social media as a pervasive means of information and entertainment. Opinions are divided about the use of social media-based political campaigns in Oyo State as a result of high level of illiteracy among people. While the youths prefer access to political campaigns on social media, the elderly prefer access to political campaigns on traditional media as result of digital imbalance. Thus, the research is conducted to: understand social media techniques used by aspirants for Local Government Chairmanship seats in Oyo State; know the factors that contribute to the use of social media for political campaigns among aspirants for the Local Government seats in Oyo State; and to ascertain barriers that exist in the use of social media among aspirants for Local Government Chairmanship seats in Oyo State.

This study is anchored on technological determinism theory. Technology determinism theory presents an idea for apprehending the nexus between communication technology and the important features of the society (Maikomo et al., 2021). Technology has the power to influence human behaviour rightly or wrongly (Asiedu et al., 2022). Technological developments, as Wasiaya et al., (2021) posit, determine the nature of society that usually emerges. The relationship between technology and societal development has been justified by many research findings (Lugonzo et al., 2023). Communication technology shapes the way people think and transform social interactions. In a technology-driven world, exchange and sharing of thoughts and opinions has become convenient. Technological platforms, more than ever before, have the capability to influence the attitudes and behaviour of citizenry (Ukaegbu, 2023). Technological determinism theory assumes that technological advancements drive societal economic and social developments. The assumptions of the theory are consistent with this study because social media-based political campaigns have brought about social changes in the society. In the context of social media-based political campaigns, the theory suggests that the adoption of technological platforms for political campaigns can transform and enhance more public participation in the democratic process (Amari, 2023). The main postulation of technological determinism theory is that societal



progress and development are heavily dependent of technological communication.

2. Materials and Methods

The study adopted mixed method. In-Depth Interview and Survey Method were adopted to investigate the opinions and knowledge of the electorates and the aspirants for the Local Government Chairmanship about the subject-matter of investigation. Qualitative research method is most often adopted method of data gathering in health and political studies, and in-depth interview is one of the methods of data collection used in qualitative approach. Qualitative approach is adopted to examine respondents', thoughts, attitudes, and belief about the use of social media-based campaigns for Local Government chairmanship elections Oyo State. As Gafar (2023) posits, qualitative method is any kind of study that does not involve statistical method or any mathematical estimates. As Dejoncheere and Vaughn (2019) aver, in-depth interview is a method of data collection approach that involves collection of information through key informants who have personal beliefs, opinions, attitudes and perceptions about subject-matter of interest. With the use of in-depth interview, researchers are determined to harvest opinions and the perceptions of subjects or interviewees by interpreting the meaning out of the described issues. In-depth interview enables the researchers to have access to respondents with detailed knowledge on issues of interest (Dejoncheere and Vaughn, 2019).

The quantitative method of research is a strategy involves quantification in the gathering and interpretations of data. Quantitative method of research emphasises measuring phenomena or variables existing in the social field (Rahman, 2016). Researchers, using quantitative methods, collect numerical data and interprets it, using one of the statistical methods of data analysis (Mcleod, 2023). Oyo State has three Senatorial Districts: Oyo North Senatorial District, Oyo South Senatorial District and Oyo Central Senatorial District. A multi-stage sampling approach affords the researchers an opportunity to take successive samples from the clusters until the selection of simple random sampling of individual respondents is possible. Thus, a multi-stage sampling approach was used to take samples from each of the clusters in Oyo State.

Adopting purposive sampling, local government areas assumed to have urban-urban characteristics in each of the three senatorial districts are purposively selected and where politicians are predominantly based and where citizens understand the use of social media for political campaigns by political aspirants for chairmanship



seats in Oyo State. Purposive sampling is used when the study focuses on special and sensitive skills, behaviour, attributes and personalities (Obilor, 2023). Purposive sampling approach is a data sampling method adopted on the basis of certain considerations or characteristics (Widyakto et al., 2022). Thus, Oyo State was grouped into three senatorial districts: Oyo North, Oyo Central and Oyo South Senatorial Districts. Moreover, the three senatorial districts were further sub-divided into local government areas. Thus, local governments that have urban-urban features were selected for this study. Thus, Oyo East Local Government area was chosen in Oyo Central Senatorial District; Ogbomosho South Local Government Area was selected in Oyo North Senatorial District while Ibadan North West was selected in the Oyo South Senatorial District. Each of the Local Government Areas was selected because each of the Local Government Areas has urban-urban features and it has educated people who understand the relevance of social media to political campaigns.

Adopting simple random sampling, the researcher selected wards and areas in the three local government areas where respondents and participants assumed to possess knowledge of digital political campaigns and relevance of social media to political campaigns. Simple random sampling is relevant to this study because the population of interest have similar characteristics and members of the population have equal chance for selection. By the use of simple random sampling, researcher draws conclusions with regard to the entire target population (Stratton, 2023). Wards and areas that were sampled included Kosobo, Owode and Araromi in Oyo East Local Government Area, Idi-Igba, Kajola and Adeoye were selected in Ogbomosho South Local Government Area, while Dugbe, Ologuneru and Onireke were selected in Ibadan North West Local Government Area. The convenience sample was later used to choose the participants or respondents for the study. In convenience sampling, data could easily be collected from the, accessible, close and available respondents. As Kivunja (2015) noted the clear advantages of convenience sampling procedure includes the availability of the respondents, the ease with which respondents could be monitored and quickness with which the data could be collected for analysis. Convenience sampling is choosing the study participants or subjects on the basis of their accessibility for one reason or another to a researcher or a group of researchers (Stratton, 2023). Access to all participants or respondents in each of the selected wards and areas was basically impossible. Consequently, respondents were selected on the basis of their geographical closeness to the researchers and the knowledge of the subject-matter under investigation. We adopted in-depth interview because it enables the researchers to have an unrestrained access to knowledge, thinking, opinions, awareness and



views of the subjects or respondents about the use of social media for political campaigns by the chairmanship aspirants for local government election in Oyo State. Using questionnaire, four-hundred respondents were interviewed in the wards and areas that have been selected for the study. Depending on the size of the population of those wards and areas, however, questionnaires were given to the respondents. 150 copies of questionnaire were given to respondents at Dugbe, Ologuneru and Onireke in Ibadan North West Local Government, 150 copies of questionnaire were given to respondents at Kosobo, Owode and Araromi in Oyo East Local Government while 100 copies of questionnaire were given to respondents at Kajola, Idi-Igba and Adeoye in Ogbomosho South Local Government Area. however, of 400 copies of questionnaire administered on the respondents, 39 copies of the questionnaire were returned and found useful to the study. Data gathered were analysed using frequency and percentage. The in-depth interview involved three respondents who are the aspirants for the position of chairman in three Local Government Area purposively selected for the study. The selected aspirants for in-depth interview are those vying for the position of chairmanship in Oyo East Local Government Area, Ibadan North West Local Government Area and Ogbomosho South Local Government Area. however, of the 400 copies of questionnaire that were administered, 396 were returned and found useful to the study. The Paired depth interview involved one English Language teacher and One Yoruba Language teacher, making six teachers in all the three selected secondary schools.

The interview session observed a strict confidentiality because the identities of the interviewees were never declared to the public, due to ethical considerations. Codes were used for each of the interview sessions that researchers had in each of the three local government areas. Data gathered were analysed and interpreted, using explanation building and also analysed thematically based on research objectives. Inferences and extractions were made about the interviewees' knowledge, awareness and perception of the use of social media for political campaigns by aspirants for local government election in Oyo State. The unstructured interviews took place in the Campaigns offices of each of the selected political aspirants. Unstructured interviews enabled the researchers and respondents to ask and answer questions freely.

3. Results

3.1 Theme 1: Social Media Techniques Adopted by Political Aspirants for LG Chairmanship Seats in Oyo State



The data gathered from in-depth interview revealed that social media techniques adopted by political aspirants for Local Government Chairmanship Election in Oyo State. The discussion showed that only few of the aspirants for the position of Local Government Chairman use social media for political campaigns. Those only use pictures and text as techniques for political campaigns. Providing more information, a participant aspiring for the position of Local Government Chairmanship in Ibadan, said:

We still prefer to use public communication methods to reach the electorates to canvass for their votes. Most of our people are still illiterate and cannot read and write. Many of them are market women and men, who do not even have internet-enabled smart phones. In that case, the best means to reach them is to gather them on a field and persuade them to vote for you in the coming elections. However, some of us who use the social media to campaign on social media only post our messages and back those messages up with pictures, but only youths reply, like or make comments about political messages posted on our social media platforms. While social media is very effective in reaching the youths who are educated, public communication method has been effective in reaching the elderly people because of digital imbalances.

Another in-depth interview participant, aspiring to becoming the Chairman of a Local Government Area in Oyo City, said:

Although, social media has given people voice and has made people to hold their leaders accountable, it has not been effective in political campaigns. Most commenters on social media view an aspirant to a political office as one of the corrupt public office seekers. Therefore, many of them haul abuses and all manner of unprintable names on political aspirants for local government elections. In fact, many of them are sponsored the political party in opposition. Either text or pictures are the technique you use to campaign on social media, they crop it and start saying all manner of evils things against your political aspirations, your personality and your political party.

3.2 Theme 2: Factors Contributing to the Use of Social Media for Political Campaigns by Aspirants

The data gathered from the in-depth interview showed the factors contributing to the use of social media for political campaigns by aspirants for Local Government election in Oyo State. The discussion showed that factors contributing to the adoption of social media for political campaigns among are surging youth population and increasing users of smartphones among young classes of population.



Providing more details, an aspirant for Local Government Chairmanship election in Ogbomoso, Oyo State, said:

We live in a digital age now. Irrespective of your profession. If you do not make use of social media technology to present yourself and your credentials to the world, you live in the stone age. Regarding political campaigns on social media, surging in the population of youths who are the main users of social media and major voters in an election has forced many politicians to register their presence on social media. As a matter of fact, you do not need to call a press conference or issue a press release any more. Any information, from you, that is meant to the general public can be posted on your X Handle and it is everywhere in the world in the minute it is posted. Therefore, the use of social media for political campaigns among aspirants for local government chairmanship in Oyo state still re-echo because social media is people-centred like politics.

Another in-depth interview participant, who aspires for the position of Chairmanship in one of the Local Government Areas, in Oyo town, said:

The cost of using radio or television for political campaigns is much. Even when you invite people to a political gathering at a football field, you must either provide refreshments or give money to transport themselves back home. All of these require you to spend money. Politics is capital-intensive, and you are not even sure you are going to emerge victorious at the end of the day. However, the use of social media has eradicated spending heavily on political campaigns. Social media does not require you to spend a dime for your political campaigns to be publicised to electorates

3.3 Theme 3: Barriers in the Use of Social Media by Political Aspirants for LG Chairmanship Seats

The data gathered from the in-depth interview showed the barriers in the use of social media for political campaigns by aspirants for Local Government election in Oyo State. The discussion showed that a few barriers are inherent in the use of social media for political campaigns among are surging youth population and the elderly people in Oyo State. Providing more information, an aspirant for Local Government Chairmanship election in Ibadan, Oyo State, said:

There are many barriers to using social media for political campaigns in Oyo State. For one, illiteracy and poverty are the major barriers to using social media for political campaigns. Even the youths assumed to be more active on social media use the medium for entertainment



and to socialise. The youths make use of social media for chatting with friends and for picture-showing and sharing. The youths' social media use for information-seeking and fact-checking is very poor. Besides, few elderly people can effectively use internet-enabled smartphones because of illiteracy. Many of the people in this Local Government Area do not use smartphones for information sharing, but to take pictures, post those pictures online and to chat with friends. So, the people are oblivious of political campaigns posted on social media. Many of them do not even read, they pass pedestrian and poor comments on political campaign related messages posted on social media.

Another in-depth interview participant, who aspires for the position of the Chairman of one of the Local Government in Ogbomosho, said:

Barriers to using social media for political campaigns are many, but the major one is the cyberstalking. Members of the opposition monitor all your activities on social media and use them against you either during physical political campaigns or on social media. Members of the opposition post all manner of false information about you on social media. And many uninformed citizens of this Local Government Area believe such information hook, line and sinker, and they use the false information in to make decisions regarding who to vote for in the coming elections.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Table 1: Social Media Techniques Adopted by Political Aspirants for LG Chairmanship Seats

Options Percentage	Frequency
Text 15.7%	62
Pictures 40%	158
Streaming Videos 31.4%	124
Social Media Live Interview 12.9%	51
Total 100	395

Source: Researchers' Field Work, 2024

Table 1 shows that 62 respondents representing 15.7% affirmed that text is the technique used by aspirants for chairmanship election of the Local Government Areas, 158 respondents representing 40% maintained that picture is the technique used by the aspirants for the

chairmanship election of the Local Government Areas, 124 respondents representing 31.4% affirmed that streaming video is used by the aspirants for chairmanship election of the Local Government Areas, while 51 respondents representing 12.9% averred that social media live interview is used by the aspirants for chairmanship election of the Local Government Areas.

Table 2: Factors Contributing to the Use of Social Media for Political Campaigns by Aspirants

Options Percentage	Frequency
Cheapness in information release 15.7%	62
Flexibility in Information Release 28.1%	111
Surging Population of Social Media Users 36.5%	144
Pervasiveness of the social media messages 19.7%	78
Total 100	395

Source: Researchers' Field Work, 2024

Table 2 shows that 62 respondents representing 15.7% posited that cheapness in information release is a factor contributing to the use of social media for political campaigns by Chairmanship aspirants of the Local Government Areas, 111 respondents representing 28.1% affirmed that flexibility in information release is a factor contributing to the use of social media for political campaigns by chairmanship aspirants of the Local Government Area, 144 respondents representing 36.5% stated that surging population of social media users is the factor contributing to the use of social media for political campaigns by chairmanship aspirants of the Local Government Areas, while 78 respondents representing 19.7% affirmed that pervasiveness of the social media messages is the factor contributing to the use of social media for political chairmanship campaigns by aspirants of the Local Government Areas.

Table: 3: Barriers in the Use of Social Media by Political Aspirants for LG Chairmanship Seats

Options Percentage	Frequency
Illiteracy 33.7%	133
Poverty 19.5%	77



Cyberstalking 21.3%	84
False Information Spread 25.6%	101
Total 100	395

Source: Researchers' Filed Work, 2024

Table 3 shows that 133 respondents representing 33.7% averred that illiteracy is a barrier to using social media by political aspirants for the Local Government Areas, 77 respondents representing 19.5% stated that poverty is a barrier to using social media by political aspirants for the Local Government Areas, 84 respondents representing 21.3% maintained that cyberstalking is a barrier to using social media by political aspirants for the Local Government Areas, while 101 respondents representing 25.6% affirmed that false information is a barrier to using social media by political aspirants for the Local Government Areas.

4. Discussions

Political aspirants who use the social media to campaign on social media only post pictures because it breaks illiteracy barriers among educated and the uneducated, but only youths reply, like or make comments about political messages posted on our social media platforms. While social media is very effective in reaching the youths who are educated, public communication method has been effective in reaching the elderly people because of digital imbalances. The findings agree with the position of Faradis et al., (2023) who state that since conventional media have failed people with regard to holding government accountable to the citizens, citizens use social media to hold the government accountable and to keep government officials on their toes.

Surging population of youths who are the main users of social media and major voters in an election has forced many politicians to register their presence on social media. The findings align with the position of Kowal (2023) who maintains that social media has become an inevitable means of political, economic, socio-cultural information sharing in Nigeria (Kowal, 2023). The relationship between social media and politics have been a symbiotic one all over the world. Pre-election, election and post-election period periods witness different perspectives, debates, arguments and counter-arguments of political opponents, political aspirants and the electorates on social media (Kowal, 2023). It also aligns with the position of Furqan et al., (2023) who avers that social media is empowering the youths to become



more politically conscious and active. Many political actors and youths are benefitting from the offerings of social media as a pervasive means of information and entertainment.

Illiteracy is the major barriers to using social media for political campaigns. Even the youths assumed to be more active on social media use the medium for entertainment and to socialise. This aligns with the position of Selmi (2023) who found that illiteracy and digital imbalance are the major barrier in the use of social media between the young and the old in developing nations.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

Social media has been more prevalently used in recent times for political communication by politicians and political parties to court the followership, membership and persuade the electorates to vote for their political party in the election. Consequently, a unit must be established in the political party organisation to oversee social media activities of their political party candidates.

As the users of social media keep increasing every day, especially the youths, there must be a course in secondary schools in Oyo State, and by extension Nigeria, to train the youths on informed and proper use of social media not only to benefit users but also to use the medium to bring about good governance and accountable leadership in Oyo State and Nigeria.

Illiteracy must be tackled headlong among youths. The importance of education, science and technology must be stressed at any available medium of mass communication. Enrollment in primary and secondary schools must be re-visited by government at different levels to reduce the incidence of illiteracy to barest minimum.

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