

‘Did Social Media Really Matter?’ Effectiveness of Twitter for Electoral Campaigns and the 2023 General Elections in Nigeria

Ridwan Tosho Idris^{1*} & Oladimeji Mohammed Alabi²

^{1&2} Department of History and International Studies, Faculty of Arts,
University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria

Corresponding Author: idirsr1994@gmail.com

Abstract

The emergence of social media platforms has played a significant role in political communication throughout election campaigns in Nigeria. Twitter is a social media platform used among the political candidates and parties in Nigeria. Therefore, this paper examined the role of Twitter by different political parties and their supporters during the 2023 Nigerian Presidential Election that shaped the election outcome. The study relies on both primary and secondary sources, including interview journals, books and newspapers, which were meticulously analyzed to gather relevant data for this study. The findings revealed that while Twitter has become an integral part of the campaign process, its influence on the outcome of the 2023 General Election was not solely decisive. Various factors hindered the efficacy of Twitter. These were the absence of a robust party structure, allegations of electoral malpractices, and incumbency’s advantage that contributed to mobilization efforts. These factors collectively undermined the effectiveness of Twitter in shaping the 2023 election results. This study concludes that the impact of Twitter and other social media platforms is contingent upon the adeptness with which political parties engage their followers through these platforms. Equally significant is how voters utilize the information acquired from social media to make informed voting decisions. Political parties must devise comprehensive strategies that harness the potential of social media while addressing the challenges and limitations that may impede their impact.

Keywords: Campaigns, Election, Nigeria, Social Media, Twitter

INTRODUCTION

Received: 1 August 2024
Accepted: 1 September 2024
Published: 31 October 2024

Since the wave of democratization in Africa, social media platforms have played significant roles in political communication, especially in election campaigns (Kushin & Yamamoto, 2010). Social media platforms have begun to play a major role in every society’s social, economic and political spheres. Social media platforms have revolutionized politics through their features that support connection among citizens, exchange messages, and discuss and criticize political issues (Narasimhamirthy, 2014). All these features and the role of social media are hinged on globalisation, which has revolutionized all forms of association and social relations faster and easier. These numerous social platforms include Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, YouTube and Instagram. However, Twitter has played a significant role in political

communication in Africa. Twitter space, through its hashtags features, has revolutionized how electoral campaigns and communications are conducted and has significantly influenced the outcome of the electoral process (Kushin & Yamamoto, 2010).

Nigeria holds a prominent position as one of the influential nations in both Africa and the West African sub-region. According to data from the United Nations Population Fund (UNPF) in 2023, Nigeria boasts a substantial population exceeding 223.8 million. Notably, within this demographic, individuals aged between 15 and 64 constitute a significant majority, accounting for 54 percent of the total population. Nigeria's political and democratic space has faced significant challenges since the return to democratic dispensation in 1999, especially regarding free and fair elections. According to the 2022 Ibrahim Index of Africa Governance (IIAG) ranked Nigeria 30th in its 2022 governance index, it has seen a drop in various governance indicators, particularly in the aftermath of the 2019 elections. Between 2018 and 2019, Nigeria experienced a -16.8 drop in its Democratic Elections indicator. Other critical indicators have declined, including Civil Society Space (-7.0) and Media Freedom (-6.3). These declines reflect concerns about Nigeria's democratic process and media freedom. The 2019 elections, with a score of 40.9, marked the end of a decade in which elections were deemed the least free and fair. This deterioration contrasts sharply with the 2015 presidential election, which received a score of 59.4, indicating a relatively higher level of free and fair democratic processes at the time (Mo Ibrahim Foundation, 2023).

One major development in Nigeria's democratic space has been the widespread use of social media in politics. Nigeria is also known for its high level of social media usage. According to a report by Statista, Nigeria had over 28 million active social media users in 2021, making it the country with the highest social media penetration rate in Africa (Statista, 2021; Agbese, 2021). However, since Nigeria's return to democratic government in 1999, there has been a rapid departure from the conventional method of campaigning, such as the physical movement of candidates, use of print media such as newspapers and electronic media like the radio and television in Nigeria's election process. The 2023 general elections in Nigeria witnessed a complete departure from these traditional approaches through the use of social media for campaigns and monitoring the election process, thereby ushering a new dawn in Nigeria's election process.

Also, social media platforms in Nigeria's election have made tremendous imprints. Nigerian citizens, political parties and politicians have seized the opportunity to

communicate more efficiently and interact in a more targeted manner. This direct interaction bypassed the need for traditional mass media as intermediaries. It also engaged citizens in political discourse, shared campaign messages and mobilised voters (Narasimhamirthy, 2014). The use of Twitter in election campaigns and political communication has expanded the scope of democracy, provides an avenue for previously marginalised people in Nigeria to engage in electoral discourse and democratic activities.

However, the use of Twitter as a political communication tool by various political parties and citizens during the 2023 Nigerian Presidential Election raises serious concerns about the platform's effectiveness in shaping electoral outcomes. As several research studies have explored into the influence of social media on electoral campaigns and results in various countries globally (Bimber, Flanagin, & Stohl, 2012; Kimani, 2018), there is a shortage of research on the use of Twitter in electoral campaigns in Nigeria, particularly in the context of the 2023 general election. This study seeks to fill this gap in the literature by examine how Twitter was used in electoral campaigns and its impact on the outcome of the 2023 general election in Nigeria. By doing so, this study will contribute to our understanding of the role of social media in political communication in Nigeria and provide insights for political candidates, political parties and citizens on how to effectively use Twitter in electoral campaigns.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Political Campaign

According to Nwaefuna (2022), a political campaign is a meticulously orchestrated strategic endeavour by individuals, political parties, or organisations with the overarching goal of securing public support and triumphing in electoral pursuits for political office. The crux of this endeavour is the manipulation of public sentiment, the gathering of support and finally the acquisition of votes required for a candidate or party to ascend to a governmental position. Obisesan (2022) defines a sophisticated communication system as being essential to any campaign. This aspect includes a wide range of outreach mechanisms, such as speeches, debates, interviews, and various media channels. A variety of communication tools, ranging from traditional media to modern social media platforms, are used to create a nexus that allows for a dynamic and interactive connection with the electorate.

Furthermore, Egbulefu and Emeke (2023) emphasise the importance of advertising in campaigning. This multifaceted strategy includes television commercials, radio broadcasts, print materials, and the vast realm of digital advertising. The goal is to fully disseminate the candidate's message, fostering resonance with a diverse and large audience. The complexities of the political campaign process in Nigeria are profoundly shaped by the country's diverse demographics, regional dynamics and the role of factors like ethnicity and religion. The legal and institutional framework established by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and the Electoral Act further regulates this complex interplay. The Nigerian political landscape reflects a symbiotic relationship between traditional and modern campaign methodologies, with technology playing an increasingly important role in recent years. The fusion of age-old campaign traditions and modern technological tools emphasises the dynamic nature of political campaigning, which reflects the changing socio-political environment (Abdulai, 2023). The complex interplay of historical practises, regulatory frameworks and technological advancements defines the landscape in which Nigerian political campaigns take place.

Social Media Engagement in Politics

Social media's integration into political campaigning and communication has prompted extensive scholarly debate regards its impact on political opinions and behaviours. This review aims to comprehensively assess existing literature on social media's influence on political engagement and electoral outcomes.

Social media networks called "weblogs", foster a bottom-up approach that emphasises content sharing, collaboration and online socialisation (Vergeer et al., 2011). They allow users to create profiles and connect with others within these networks. Social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and YouTube have significantly impacted communication dynamics (Vergeer et al., 2011). On Twitter, users can access fellow users' profiles, engage through tweets visible to their followers and share various forms of media such as pictures, messages and links to external sources through hashtags (Wasswa, 2013). Twitter enables users to express their views, debate, and form social communities and groups on diverse public matters (Kushin & Yamamoto, 2010). By utilizing Twitter's capabilities to post images and videos, individuals can actively participate in political events occurring in different locations in real time. The internet is seen as a tool that promotes participatory and deliberative democracy.

It is important to recognise the opportunities provided by social media in democratising election campaigns. However, Vergeer et al. (2011) also point out that while social media's liberal nature presents opportunities, it also carries risks. Effing et al. (2011) note that although there is great potential for social media in political communication, its use in electoral campaigns often lacks strategy or a comprehensive plan, which can limit the benefits for political parties and candidates. Vergeer et al. (2011) contend that social media platforms such as Twitter have reduced political parties' control over their candidates' campaign strategies and interactions with their supporters. Hence, candidates can express their opinions and views independently, free from the influence of their parties. This creates a direct relationship between the candidates and their Twitter followers, who hold them accountable for their actions and statements. One significant advantage of Twitter is its immediate feedback feature, which allows candidates to clarify or correct any misunderstandings about their comments or actions, makes it a more effective tool for political communication. This study highlighted risk in social media campaign such as lack of strategic planning and reduced party control over campaign strategies.

Social media also allows for the rapid dissemination of information and news, enables citizens to stay informed about political events and developments in real time. Bode and Dalrymple (2018) noted that social media "provides a platform for political engagement, giving individuals the opportunity to connect, share information and express their views on political issues" (p. 254). Towner and Dulio's (2018) study shows that "social media platforms are increasingly being used to share news, opinions and perspectives on political issues, provides citizens with a broader range of information and viewpoints than traditional media sources" (p. 383). However, social media create echo chambers and reinforce existing beliefs and biases, leads to polarisation and a lack of meaningful political discourse (Barberá et al. 2019, p.599). Furthermore, there is concern about the spread of misinformation and fake news on social media, which can have a negative impact on political discourse and decision-making (Wardle and Derakhshan 2017, p.22), "These researches addresses concern the polarisation and the spread of misinformation on social media, underscores the potential impact on political discourse and decision-making".

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The method adopted in this study is qualitative and content analysis. This research drew its data from both primary and secondary sources. Primary sources include interviews purposively sampled. This study attributes data received from informants with Key Informant Interviews (KII) to refer to some of the key information gathered during the interview process. At the same time, the secondary sources include peer-reviewed journals, books and newspapers that discuss elections and campaigns. These sources gathered detailed and reliable information about the electoral campaign and Twitter roles. These secondary data were subjected to content analysis techniques.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Use of Twitter in Nigeria's Elections before 2023

Election campaigning in Nigeria has undergone significant transformations 'under different democratic dispensations since 1959. Election campaigns have played a significant role in shaping the nation's political landscape. The use of posters for election, grassroots mobilisation and political rallies have dominated election campaigns in Nigeria (Adeyemi & Adeyemi, 2015; Igbuzor, 2019; Omodia & Obanor, 2019). However, there has been a shift in election campaigning in Nigeria in recent years due to the increasing use of technology and social media. Adesina and Igbuzor (2018) noted that social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp had become important tools for political campaigning and communication, enabling candidates and parties to reach a wider audience and engage with voters in real-time.

Twitter's emergence has profoundly impacted Nigerian society, particularly within its political realm. Okoro and Ugbah (2019) found it to be the second most utilized social media platform in Nigeria, boasting over 6 million active users. Since its introduction in 2008, Twitter has swiftly gained traction, particularly among the youth demographic (Fink et al., 2016). Its user-friendly interface and instantaneous nature have rendered it a favoured platform for discussing contemporary events, politics, and societal matters. Moreover, Twitter has democratized political discourse, providing an equitable platform for opposition parties and candidates to engage with a broader audience and challenge prevailing narratives perpetuated by the ruling party (Ahmed, Cho & Jaidka, 2017).

Twitter significantly influenced Nigerian politics during the 2015 and 2019 general elections. According to Oluwaseun (2016) argue that it served as a key tool for political parties and candidates to mobilize supporters, share information and monitor election proceedings, fostering transparency and accountability, as citizens could report malpractices and track results in real time. In the 2019 elections, over 29 million election-related tweets were recorded between December 2018 and February 2019, with the hashtag #NigeriaDecides trending (Czerep, 2018). Twitter facilitated the dissemination of election outcomes, fact-checking and violence monitoring. However, its impact is marred by challenges such as the spread of fake news, hate speech and incitement to violence, particularly among the youth.

Twitter usage among Nigerian youths increased recently, with Data Reportal reporting 4.95 million Nigerian users on Twitter in early 2023, equivalent to 2.2% of the population (Kemp, 2023). Particularly during the #EndSARS protests in October 2020, Twitter emerged as a key platform for political discourse and activism among Nigerian youth, mobilised to demand the disbandment of the controversial police unit. The hashtag #EndSARS trended over 30 million times on Twitter, facilitating protest coordination, information dissemination and fundraising efforts (African Arguments, 2020). In response, the Nigerian government proposed social media regulation, cited concerns over fake news and hate speech. This move drew widespread criticism from civil society groups and opposition parties, who saw it as an infringement on freedom of expression and an effort to silence dissent.

Did Social Media Really Matter? Effectiveness of Twitter in the 2023 Election

The 2023 Nigerian general election emerged as a fiercely contested event in the nation's democratic history, witnessed substantial engagement from diverse Nigerian demographics. Media platforms, both traditional and digital, were inundated with comprehensive coverage and analysis of the electoral campaigns. Amidst the 18 political parties registered by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) for the election contest, the electoral competition predominantly centered around three prominent parties: the All Progressives Congress (APC), the Labour Party (LP), and the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP). Notably, the presence of dynamic and charismatic leaders within these parties intensified the election's intrigue. Various factors, including notable political events such as Peter Obi's transition from PDP to LP, contributed to the distinctive atmosphere surrounding the 2023 election. Furthermore, novel campaign

strategies and raised issues distinguished the election from the previous election exercise, while the active participation of youth leaders like Dr. Christopher Irene Imumolen (AP), Prince Adewole Adebayo (SDP) and Omoyele Sowore (AAC) further highlighted its unique nature.

Social media emerged as a potent mobilisation tool, prompted traditional media to integrate it into their outreach strategies. The widespread adoption of platforms like Twitter revolutionised election campaigns, empowered candidates to directly engage with voters and deliver unfiltered messages. This shift ignited significant enthusiasm among social media users, who actively participated in election-related debates and discussions. All major political parties and their candidates leveraged social media extensively, established individualised Twitter pages to convey candidate and party principles and engage with followers. The 2023 Nigerian general election witnessed an unprecedented utilisation of social media, with Nigerian youths inundated with political content on Twitter, which includes images from rallies and portraits of candidates.

Moreover, during the campaign, APC candidate Bola Ahmed Tinubu's supporters were known as "BATified", while the opposition candidate Peter Obi's supporters formed the "Obedients" group on Twitter and Atiku Abubakar's supporters as "Atikulated". These groups generated daily trending topics on Twitter, garnered thousands of likes and shares political messages aimed at informed voters about campaign activities. Although these posts garnered positive responses from supporters, they also attracted criticism from opposing factions. The online presence of these parties remained highly active, with Twitter served as a potent platform for engaging with voters and rallying support. Candidates and political parties utilised their Twitter pages to disseminate information about rallies, invited supporters to participate in ground campaigns.

Twitter proved highly effective for Nigeria's major political parties, enables to reached broader audience compared to traditional media. Specifically, Peter Obi, moved from PDP to LP during the primary election, swiftly mobilised supporters through Twitter. This platform facilitated real-time presentation of policies, ideas, and campaign visuals, particularly benefiting candidates with limited financial resources. Its cost-efficiency made Twitter an ideal campaign platform, enable politicians to portray themselves positively to voters. Social media also complemented traditional campaign tactics like rallies and tours for the APC, LP and PDP in Nigeria. These parties utilised social media to announce nationwide campaign tours, successfully engaging young

audiences. The significant youth turnout at rallies was partially influenced by social media, notably among “Obidients”, LP supporters. Peter Obi, LP’s flagbearer, garnered substantial youth support due to his relatively younger age compared to the other two leading political parties and stance against money-driven politics. This made the LP candidate to facilitate the rapid dissemination of this ideology, promoted integrity, competence, transparency and prudent resource management, known colloquially as “shishi”, or no politics of monetary inducements.

An interview revealed that the LP experienced financial constraints during the 2023 general election compared to APC and PDP, it is stated that it affected their traditional campaign strategies, led to lack of posters and radio programs in remote areas. The party struggled to locate signboards or posters of its presidential candidate during the campaign (KIIA). Due to limited funds, the party shifted towards cost-effective alternatives, by leveraged on social media platforms, particularly Twitter (KIIB). Twitter’s wide reach and low cost allowed the party to effectively engage with audiences, disseminate messages and mobilised supporters, thus maintained a dynamic and impactful digital presence (KIIC). This insight is relevant within a democratic framework, as opposition parties often cite funding constraints and limited media access as reasons for their underperformance. As a result, 2023 election witnessed a blend of social media and traditional methods, sparked interest among apolitical youths, with the innovation of branded and slogans, such as “Obidients” and “Batified”, ensured that party messages were firmly ingrained in the public consciousness.

During the 2023 Nigerian General Election, prominent politicians such as Ahmed Tinubu, Peter Obi, Atiku Abubakar and Rabiun Kwankoso actively utilised Twitter to update their campaign schedules and communicate with supporters. Peter Obi, the Labour Party’s presidential candidate, notably leveraged his Twitter platform on October 20, 2022, urged his millions followers to support his campaign financially and with resources. This call garnered significant engagement, with 70 thousand likes and 6 thousand comments, indicated its broad reach. Similarly, Ahmed Tinubu and Atiku Abubakar also attracted attention from their supporters on Twitter, generated likes and comments. Especially, Peter Obi distinguished himself among presidential candidates by amassing a substantial following on Twitter. Prior to declared his presidential bid in February 2022, Obi had 715,000 followers, which surged to 2.56 million after his announcement, marked a remarkable 235 percent increase and positioned him as the presidential candidate with the largest Twitter following.

Peter Obi's increased Twitter followers suggests effective utilisation of the platform for voter engagement, highlighted the inadequacies of traditional media in reaching younger demographics. Kushin and Yamamoto (2010) emphasise the importance of social media for engaging younger voters due to its accessibility and interactivity in political communication. Kushin and Yamamoto state that:

Utilising social media, particularly microblog updates and live streaming of political campaigns, enhances individuals' political self-efficacy by fostering increased engagement with preferred candidates or parties, thereby boosting confidence in their ability to participate actively in the political process.

The presence of presidential candidates on Twitter may stimulate increased political engagement, particularly among youth, potentially leads to seek further political information and engage more actively in democratic processes. Yushin and Yamamoto (2010) suggest a correlation between online political participation and political efficacy, denotes individuals' confidence in their capacity to influence politics. Moreover, situational political involvement, indicative of interest in societal issues, correlates with online political engagement, implies Twitter's role in nurtured interest and confidence in electoral processes, potentially drove higher youth voter turnout. Thus, Twitter presents an advantageous platform for political parties with limited resources to mobilised young voters.

The ruling party perceives social media as both a powerful communication tool and a potential threat. The circulation of videos highlighted the presidential candidate's repeated gaffes, questioning his suitability to lead Nigeria, gained widespread traction on social media platforms. Notably, statements such as "recruitment of 50 million soldiers who will eat cassava, agbado, corn" and "do you know how many of you are tweeting on WhatsApp right now?", triggered reactions, particularly from young Twitter users, raised concerns about the candidate's health. Also, social media platforms, notably Twitter, have revolutionised the traditional media landscape, with TV stations and newspapers established their presence. Television stations in Nigeria like Arise TV, Channels TV and TVC utilise Twitter to extensively cover and analyse presidential candidates' rallies and campaign manifestos across Nigeria. Through their Twitter pages, these stations facilitate engagement with the electorate, enable participants to provide feedback on campaign manifestos. This feedback, in turn, assists candidates in refine their campaigns and address public concerns. Furthermore, discussions and debates among Twitter users offer

candidates valuable insights on public opinion and perspectives, informed their campaign strategies.

The emergence of new technologies have transformed political communication beyond mere polling, enable broader citizen participation. Twitter, especially, has enhanced democratic engagement by make live debates and campaign events accessible to a wider audience. This convergence of traditional and new media has increased access to political information. The 2023 elections witnessed vigorous debates on critical issues on Twitter, deepened political understanding and fostered voter enthusiasm. Engagement on Twitter played a crucial role in strengthen the bond between voters and candidates, transcend professional boundaries. This approach also attract previously uninvolved voters to participate in politics, as seen with effective Twitter usage by opposition candidates. The adoption of new campaign strategies heightened excitement in Nigerian elections, intensified the competition for political power and allowed third-party candidates to challenge the ruling party's dominance through social media visibility. This illustrates how social media has levelled the political playing field by granted equal media access to all parties.

Did Twitter Fail in the 2023 General Election?

The presence of Twitter does not guarantee electoral success, however, it holds significance place in shaped the public opinion and political discourse. Despite Peter Obi's substantial gains from leveraged on Twitter during the 2023 Nigerian presidential election, other factors impeded his victory. Twitter played a pivotal role in altering the traditional electoral narrative, offered a platform for candidates across party lines to directly engage with voters, disseminate campaign messages and mobilise support. This facilitated real-time information sharing, public discourse and active citizen participation in the political process. The widespread adoption of Twitter by presidential contenders and their supporters underscored its efficacy in reaching a broad audience, particularly the tech-savvy Nigerian youth who actively engaged in political discussions on the platform.

Twitter's role in the 2023 election campaign significantly enhanced participatory democracy. It provided an inclusive platform for diverse voices to contribute to policy discourse and advocate for various programs. Its interactive nature facilitated bottom-up engagement, enabling citizens to shape the political narrative actively. During the

campaign, Twitter facilitated dynamic political communication, enabling politicians, parties and citizens to share information, express opinions and engage in real-time discussions on policies and candidates. This direct interaction promoted inclusiveness and transparency in the democratic process. Twitter's concise messages and rapid dissemination of information facilitated the spread of policy proposals, informing voters and enhancing their understanding of the political agenda. The use of multimedia features, such as images and videos, further improved accessibility and comprehension of policies and programs. Moreover, Twitter served as a platform for diaspora engagement, allowed them to actively participate in electoral discussions and influence democratic processes in Nigeria. This incorporation of the diaspora adds a transnational dimension to Nigeria's electoral setting, reflects the evolved nature of political participation in the digital age.

Presidential candidate Peter Obi faced obstacles to victory due to various factors. The Labour Party's weak nationwide organisational structure allowed for defections to other parties, such as Banji Omotoso leads the collapse of the LP structure in Ondo state for the APC, potentially impacting the election outcome. Criticism of Obi by Seun Kuti on INEC's official Twitter handle prompted accusations of INEC's bias, further complicating matters. The ruling All Progressives Congress (APC) utilised its government resources and existing infrastructure to influence the election, giving it an advantage. On the Election Day, March 27, 2023, complaints emerged regarding INEC presiding officers' late arrival, discrimination in opposition strongholds, failures of the BVAS, and challenges in transmitting results to the IReV. Voter suppression, vote buying and ballot snatching occurred, notably in Port Harcourt, where the Rivers state government reported instances of suppression and the abduction of a Labour Party agent, affecting the election outcome. In addition, threats against the state Collation Officer, Professor Charles Teddy Addias, further marred the electoral process.

The failure to transmit polling unit results was a significant issue during the presidential/national assembly elections, drawing criticism from both local and international observers. Logistical challenges and instances of political violence hindered voter participation, overshadowing the electoral process (Adeyemi, 2023). At the Abuja collation centre, party agents, includes Dino Melaye and Emeka Ihedioha from the PDP and LP parties, staged a walkout due to INEC's failure to transmit results as promised, as mandated by the Electoral Act 2022. This departure from manual result transmission methods of the past was contentious (Oyero, 2023). After three days, the election's

official outcome declared Ahmed Bola Ahmed Tinubu of the ruling APC as the winner with 8,794,726 votes. Alhaji Atiku Abubakar of the PDP received 6,984,520 votes, followed by Peter Obi with 6,101,533 votes and Rabiul Kwankwaso with 1,456,687 votes (<https://liveresults.civichive.org/presidential/2023>).

Prior to the election, concerns emerged regarding the Labour Party's ability to clinch victory in the presidential race, despite their active presence on Twitter. Notable critic Fati Muhammad, a former Kannywood actress, emphasised that while Peter Obi enjoyed popularity on Twitter, electoral outcomes hinge on polling unit votes rather than social media engagement (The Nation, 2022). Various commentators expressed differing opinions on Obi's electoral prospects, with some positing he might only garner support from one state, while others doubted his capacity to win any state. Despite endorsements and favourable ratings from reputable local and international entities, the political establishment maintained skepticism towards his candidacy. Speculation arose that Obi, along with Kwankwaso, as third and fourth contenders, could potentially influence the election, possibly leading to a run-off. However, Hadi Sirika, former Minister of Aviation, presented an alternative perspective, contends that Peter Obi's performance as the presidential candidate of LP underscored the importance of Twitter in electoral dynamics. He asserted that Obi's strong shown in the Presidential and National Assembly elections was significantly influenced by Twitter role in campaigning. He refuted claims suggested Twitter insignificance in electoral processes, cited Obi's substantial progress as evidence. Social media, he argued, wields considerable influence in shaping public opinion, ranking second only to tangible achievements. However, it could be argued that despite Peter Obi's Twitter popularity, factors such as a weak party structure, allegations of electoral irregularities and the incumbency advantage in mobilisation contributed to Twitter's ineffectiveness in the 2023 election.

Conclusion

This study examines Twitter's role in the 2023 Nigerian General Election, evaluates its impact on electoral campaigns. The findings indicate social media, particularly Twitter, is now integral to Nigerian campaigning, though its influence is constrained by factors such as weak party structures, electoral misconduct allegations and incumbency advantages. The effective future use of Twitter and similar platforms hinges on political parties' adept utilisation and voters' discernment of social media information.

However, strategies must be devised to harness social media's potential while address associated challenges.

Acknowledgements

We extend our heartfelt appreciation to the esteemed reviewers who invested their time and expertise in evaluating our research article. Also, my colleague in Olawale Yemisi (University of Ilorin, Nigeria) for painstakingly read the draft. Your thoughtful insights and constructive criticism have been instrumental in refining the quality and depth of this research.

Funding

No fund received.

Author contributions

Both authors contributed to the write up of this study.

Conflict of interest

No potential conflict of interest by the authors of this research.

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