



Article

Social Media and the Voting Behaviour of Electorates in the 2023 Nigeria Presidential Election: A Study of Etsako West Local Government Area

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Abstract

The impact of social media on the present society is numerous. These impacts are evident in all areas of human endeavor, from religious to socio-economic and political amongst others. The past elections in Nigeria from the year 1999, 2007 and 2015 respectively had experienced little influence of social media but there was major shift with the 2023 presidential election. This study evaluated the impacts of social media on the voting behaviour of electorates in the 2023 Presidential Election in Etsako West Local Government Area. The study employed the technological determinism theory. Qualitative and quantitative approach were employed in this study. Taro Yamani formular was used to select a sample size for the study. The study found that social media influenced the voting behaviour of electorate in the 2023 Presidential Election in Etsako West L.G.A. and impacted the outcome of the 2023 Presidential Election in Etsako West L.G.A. The study recommended that; election-related campaigns on social media should be continuous and free from vices, government organizations should exploit social media, community voting should be replaced by individual voting and the electorate should understand that their choice of candidate will have a continual impact on their lives.

Keywords

Electorate, Election, Internet, Social media, Voting behaviour.

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Introduction

The growth of the internet and technology has exposed a large number of individuals worldwide to a variety of interactive platforms. These platforms have the capacity to significantly impact human behavior, judgment, and decision-making while facilitating the exchange of diverse kinds of information (Centre for European Studies (CES), 2012). Social media is a brand-new kind of technology and information network that makes it easier to communicate by nurturing and sustaining human connections through interactive, user-generated content (Okolo, et al., 2017). As the new mass medium of the twenty-first century, the internet has drastically changed the mass media. Due to the quick, low-cost, and extensive dissemination of information, anyone can produce and consume news (Prat & Stromberg, 2011).

The globe is now a "global village", thanks to social media, as the rapid dissemination of information overcomes the limitations of time and space (Friedman, 2012). Social media has steadily emerged as a significant tool for influencing society, and its social components of engagement and interaction serve as the sole foundation for this influence (Hasiya & Abdullahi, 2020). In the current twenty-first century, the internet has drastically changed the mass media. Due to the quick, low-cost, and extensive dissemination of information, anyone can produce and consume news (Prat & Stromberg, 2011). The globe is now a "global village" thanks to social media, as the rapid dissemination of information overcomes the limitations of time and space (Friedman, 2012). Social media has steadily emerged as a significant tool for influencing society, and its social components of engagement and interaction serve as the sole foundation for this influence (Niyitse, et al., 2021).

According to Obarisiagbon et al. (2017), voting behavior is a type of political behavior displayed by electorates and can be impacted by a variety of elements, including emotions, race, gender, ethnicity, and religion, which can lead to certain conclusions. The actions lead to either abstention from voting or support for political parties or candidates (Rule, 2014). The electorates' voting behavior may also be influenced by important external elements including the internet, societal perspectives, political socialization, and tolerance for different political viewpoints. Internal elements such as attitudes, beliefs, and electorate knowledge gleaned from internet sources determine how these external factors affect voting behavior (Obarisiagbon, et al., 2017).

In Nigeria, most political parties, including the three major parties the All Progressives Congress (APC), People's Democratic Party (PDP), and Labour Party (LP) as well as their respective candidates, Bola Ahmed Tinubu, Atiku Abubakar, and Peter Obi, used social media platforms including blogs, mobile newspapers, news ads, and online networking sites to express their interest in becoming the next president of Nigeria and to encourage not only young people but all internet users to vote for them. This was evident during the February 25, 2023 presidential elections in Nigeria. This resulted in a wide range

of captivating news and drama on the internet, giving users the chance to read, reply, engage, debate, and trash out topics. With the use of debates, hashtags, and online campaigns, individuals were able to express their opinions on different candidates on Twitter, Facebook, blogs, online newspapers, and other platforms. On matters of national concern, this united all Nigerians, regardless of political affiliation, ethnicity, or religion (Obarisiagbon, et al., 2017).

Since social media represents a new paradigm shift, it has put political communication to the test. In the past, newspapers, radio, and television dominated political campaign coverage, making them the main sources of information about elections. This study aims to evaluate the influence of social media on voters' voting behavior in the 2023 presidential election in Edo State's Etsako West Local Government Area in light of this paradigm shift.

Prior to the 2023 Presidential Election, elections conducted in the previous years have not really been strongly influenced by the social media because the social media has not been really accommodated by people in Nigeria. Although, it should be noted that social media had some fragment of impacts in the 2019 General election because as that time social media was gradually been accommodated by people in Etsako West Local Government Area of Edo State (Sulaiman, 2023).

Most research study (Obarisiagbon, 2017, Modibbo, 2019, Gabriel, et al., 2022, Aijehi, 2018, and Sulaiman, et al., 2023) investigated social media's impact on the voting behaviour of electorates in previous elections, this study examined how social media impacted the voting behaviour of the electorate in the most recent (2023) Presidential election in Etsako West Local Government Area, Edo State. The objective of the study is to evaluate the impacts of social media on the voting behaviour of electorate in the 2023 Presidential Election in Etsako West Local Government Area.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Concept of Voting Behaviour

Since most political activities involve voting, voting behavior is typically thought of as political behavior. Musa (2018) cites Chinoye as saying that voting behavior is a subset of electoral behavior, which is the behavioral patterns of all voters in a given district during an electioneering period. Both Chadjiadelis and Andreadis (2007) conceptually divided up the options available to voters throughout an electioneering process. He claims that in local elections, voters select candidates who can best serve them, but in presidential and parliamentary elections, voters are directed to select representatives based on their political views. Voters cast their ballots for or against a specific policy during a referendum,

mostly based on how effective it is. In the 2004 Cyprus referendum, Chadjipadelis and Andreadis (2007) classified voting behavior into the aforementioned categories.

In a political approach to voting conduct, Goldman (1966) in his work on political behaviour, thought that it impacts decision making process notably with public decision makers, who are voted by the electorate. In contrast, voting behavior is strongly associated with individualism and democratic ideas in Deiner's (2000) work, which was highlighted in Osuoza (2021). According to this claim, a society's degree of individual voting freedom influences how its citizens behave. When an individual's rights are protected, democracy will thrive. Winkielman et al. (2007) found that voting behavior was significantly influenced by the "affect" factor, and that rural residents preferred socialist parties while urban residents preferred conservative parties. This indicates that rural residents are more likely to deal psychologically with emotional ties, particularly those that affect them, rather than adopt political ideologies, campaigns, and party programs. Voter behavior analysis always focuses on the factors that influence why people vote the way they do and how they make decisions (Afolabi, 2018).

Sociologists usually look at the socio-economic determinants of support for political parties, noting the relationships between class, occupation, ethnicity, sex, age, and vote, whereas political scientists have concentrated on the influence of political factors such as issues, political programs, electoral campaigns, and the popularity of party leaders on voting behavior (Kumar et al., 2015). Therefore, this study views voting behavior as a form of political behavior exhibited by electorates, which can be influenced by a number of factors, such as emotions, race, gender, ethnicity, and religion, and can result in particular decisions.

Concept of Social Media

According to Sherman (2010), Nicole B. Ellison of Michigan State University's Department of Telecommunications, Information Studies, and Media and Danah Boyd of the University of California School of Information coined the phrase "social media" in 2007. The concepts are not synonymous, despite the fact that they are frequently used interchangeably with terms like social networking sites and new media. It's important to consider what social networking sites are in order to appropriately frame the idea of social media. (Okoro and Santas, 2017). As defined by Boyd and Ellison (2007), "social networking sites are web-based services that allow individuals to view and navigate their list of connections and those made by others within the system, articulate a list of other users with whom they share a common connection, and construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system." Abbas (2016) defines social media as computer-mediated technologies that enable people to create, exchange, or share information, photos, videos, and ideas in online groups and networks. Websites and

programs dedicated to forums, microblogging, social networking, social bookmarking, social curating, and wikis are among the different types of social media (Khan and Haque, 2017).

As stated by Chijioke (2013), "Social media are simply internet based interactive platforms through which people can create and exchange information in a participatory manner on a real-time basis," supporting the definition provided by Boyd and Ellison. He went on to say that these online communication channels are democratic and participatory, allowing people to exchange documents and information. According to Arthur (2011), social media are internet-based tools and services that enable individuals to communicate with one another, produce and share content, and search for information online. "Online platforms that promote participation, openness, conversation, and connectedness" is how Mayfield (2008) characterizes these media. Social media emerged with the growth of the internet and the World Wide Web. Social media are "new media" that speed up conversations in a more interesting way, improving communication's usefulness and efficacy.

Empirical Review

In their study, Okoro and Santas (2017) sought to investigate how social media was used for political communication during Nigeria's 2011 presidential election. The purpose of the study was to ascertain whether voters' use of social media affected their selection of presidential candidates. 249 copies of the questionnaire were distributed, and 249 respondents chosen by random selection answered them. According to the results of the descriptive statistics, the use of social media affected the majority of respondents' selection of presidential candidates in the 2011 election, as evidenced by the high mean value of 1.5805. Similarly, the respondents believed that the two presidential candidates who were chosen were well-liked due to their usage of social media during their campaign (mean value of 1.5575). Furthermore, the participants confirmed that their use of social media affected how they voted in the 2011 presidential election. A high mean value of 1.6667 confirmed this. Likewise, the outcome of the hypothesis test showed that political communication on social media impacted voters' selection of political candidates. The results also showed that voters' choice of candidates was influenced by their ethnicity and religious connections. The study's conclusions led to the conclusion that social media has changed the political communication environment in Nigeria and should be utilized in the country's next elections. Only respectable candidates should be elected to office, the publication added, and voters should make sure that they de-emphasize ethnic and religious factors in their voting behavior in future elections.

The impact of social media on voting behavior in Nassarawa Ward "ONE" in Kaduna State's Chikun Local Government Area was investigated by Aijehi (2018). Voting behavior theory was used as the theoretical foundation for the investigation. In order to explain the impact of social media on voting

behavior in Nassarawa Ward "ONE" in the Chikun Local Government Area of Kaduna State, this study also included data from primary and secondary sources. It was shown that the majority of study participants used social media for election-related purposes, and that throughout the election, they received direct messages from political campaigns that positively impacted their opinions. Since social media is a powerful instrument that allows people to discuss both everyday issues and larger matters like elections, it also demonstrated that social media has the potential to significantly increase political participation and voter turnout.

A poll was carried out by Modibbo (2019) to investigate the impact of social media on voting behavior during the 2015 Ilorin-metropolis presidential election. The study's justification was to ascertain the degree to which Facebook and Twitter usage affects voters' selection of presidential candidates and turnout. The research utilized a hybrid methodology, utilizing both questionnaires and interviews. 384 copies of the questionnaire were distributed, and 384 respondents who were chosen by random selection answered it. The use of Agenda Setting theory served as the foundation for the investigation. Findings show that the use of Facebook and Twitter has 8.6% influence of voters behavior. It also demonstrates that social media was used to target opponents, propagate false rumours, hate and inflammatory comments. The study's data led to the conclusion that social media, notably Facebook and Twitter, had an impact on voting behavior. It was also recommended that the various media laws be reviewed very away in order to address the particular difficulties associated in regulating and monitoring the usage of different social media platforms.

A survey of the literature on social media indicates that a great deal of study has been done on how social media affects voters' election-related voting behavior. In order to determine how social media affects voting behavior, Aslana et al. (2021) administered a poll to 1,231 residents of the Turkish province of Kayseri. The study found that voters' experiences with social media varied greatly based on their gender, marital status, age, level of education and income, place of residence, reason for using it, and alignment with political agendas.

The goal of Ravi et al. (2021) was to comprehend how voters use social media to inform their voting decisions. The results of the study show that social media significantly influences voters' decisions, especially young voters. The study found that people's decisions to support a certain party are significantly influenced by the remarks, tweets, and statements made by political leaders.

According to Dampety and Akparep (2022), Ghanaians' voting decisions are significantly influenced by the media. Since then, political parties have used the media to forward their agendas in a number of democracies. The study's goal was to find out how the media affected Ghana's Western North Region's voting patterns. Both convenience and purposeful sampling methods were applied in this investigation. Both qualitative and quantitative research designs were used in the study. Data was

gathered using interview guides and questionnaires. There were 404 responders in the sample. Voter behavior in the study region is significantly influenced by political campaigns, broadcast, social, print, support, and transit media advertisements, as well as the communication devices that voters in the study area have access to for information gathering. According to the report, 65.6% of respondents claimed that the media significantly influenced how they voted in the research region's general elections in 2020. The study discovered that party identity, party ideology, current economic situations, family and friends, and current government performance were additional factors impacting voting behavior in the study area, in addition to the media. Because voters want better and more access to the media and utilize it to learn about political parties' operations so that they can influence their voting behavior, the study suggested that the technical infrastructure of the media in the study region be expanded. Additionally, the study region should improve media sanity.

Gabriel et al. (2022) in their study "Influence of Social Media on Abuja Youths Voting Behavior in 2019 General Elections: a study of Twitter," determined how Twitter may be used as a platform to influence voting behavior, specifically among Abuja's young. based on the principle of technology determinism. With a sample size of 100 respondents, the survey research methodology was used, and an online questionnaire was used as the instrument for data collection. According to the study's findings, "Twitter" is a social media tool that has a significant impact on young people. It also proved to be successful in improving voter behavior. According to the study's findings, Twitter one of the most popular social media platforms, particularly among young people plays a significant role in somewhat influencing voter behavior. Therefore, the study suggests that more political parties be pushed to establish a prominent online presence. Additionally, since social media has a wider audience than conventional media, the federal government should step up its information and communication technology (ICT) push in education and other areas of the nation.

In their study, Igbinedion and Ajisebiyawo (2023) evaluated the impact of social media on Nigerian voters' choices during the February 25, 2023, presidential election. They assessed how the free flow of information affected voters' decision-making using the satisfaction theory. They discovered that social media platforms were effective instruments for the quick spread of political information throughout the 2023 Nigerian election process, serving as vital channels for political dialogue and facilitating the quick distribution of information to a larger audience. The researchers discovered a correlation between the frequency of social media interactions involving political content and the preferences of voters during Nigeria's 2023 presidential elections. They concluded that social media not only increased voter turnout but also influenced election results, with its influence spanning a wide range of demographic, social, economic, and cultural factors.

Social media did positively affect youth participation in the political and electoral process, especially in the 2019 Nigerian general elections, according to a study by Sulaiman et al. (2023), which was guided by the agenda-setting theory and used a survey method to gather data. The study found that social media influenced youths' choice of political candidate and party, but surprisingly, it did not actually ensure that young people would vote for any political candidate simply because they had a social media account. Additionally, the survey found that social media influences political activity and that young people view it as a trustworthy platform for political discourse.

Yadi et al. (2023) when it came to the Pemilihan Kepala Daerah, or PILKADA 2020, investigated how media exposure affected the voting habits of Sumbawa voters in Indonesia. A Multi-Level Random Sampling technique was used to select a sample of 400 voters. In order to better understand this phenomenon, a set of questionnaires was used in the field as a data gathering tool. This supports the notion that voting behavior is directly influenced by the media, in contrast to previous theories that focused their argument on social and cultural variables. In contrast to mass media, the study shows that respondents in this field choose online media and media such as billboards or banners, posters, calendars, or stickers as sources of political information.

The study therefore hypothesizes that:

H₀: Social media had no significant influence on the voting behaviour of electorate in the 2023 Presidential Election in Etsako West Local Government Area.

From the above reviewed works, it was observed that most of these studies focus on specific areas of social media effects and also made use of other methods. The goal of this study is to empirically probe the impacts of social media on the voting behaviour of electorate in the 2023 Presidential Election in Etsako West Local Government Area. This study focuses on Etsako West and its social media experience in the 2023 presidential election.

Theoretical Framework

This research is hinged on the limit of Technological Determinism Theory.

According to the reductionist theory of technological determinism (T.D.), technology is the main force behind social development and change, influencing the formation of cultural values and social structure. According to technological determinism, machines shape historical development by changing

the material conditions of human life, and a society's technological advancements follow their own internal logic of efficiency (Heder, 2021).

Marshal McLuhan, a Canadian scholar, developed the thesis of technological determinism in 1962. Marshall McLuhan shaped the communications theory of technological determinism. The theory's central tenet is that shifts in human communication patterns influence how we live. According to McLuhan, our communication skills shape our culture. Thorstein Veblen, an American sociologist and economist who lived from 1857 to 1929, is credited with coining the word (Okunnu, 2014). According to technological determinism, technology has a greater impact on social behavior than any other component. T.D. aims to identify a single principal or determining element that can be used to explain historical and social occurrences. Agbanu asserts that technological determinism holds that "as a society transitions from one technological age to the next, technology shapes how individuals in that society think, feel, and act." Merritt Roe Smith (1994) summed up technological determinism as the conviction that technology is a major guiding factor in society (Okunnu, 2014).

William Ogburn, Neil Postman, Harold Innis, and Clarence Ayres are some of the other people who have contributed to this notion. Innis investigated how civilizations are shaped by communication technologies. Postman criticized how technology affects culture. Ayres concentrated on the conflict between ceremonial buildings and technology. Ogburn stressed the importance of cultural lag. The idea of cultural lag describes how it takes time for culture to keep up with technology advancements and the social issues that arise as a result. There are advantages and disadvantages to the T.D. idea. The T.D. theory's main advantage is its capacity to draw attention to the significant impact that technology may have on society. It highlights how technology has the ability to change political systems, communication styles, and cultural standards. Second, by emphasizing the influence of technology, this theory clarifies how inventions can significantly alter society. Last but not least, the idea covers a wide range of historical periods, from archaic technology like hand axes, spears, fishing hooks, choppers, animal traps, and digging and scraping tools to more recent developments like social media and cryptocurrencies. Even though the T.D. theory has its advantages, it has also been condemned. The T.D. hypothesis has been criticized for oversimplifying complicated sociological events and neglecting the role of human activity. They argue that rather than developing in accordance with its own internal logic of efficiency, technology is affected by social, cultural, and political considerations. The reductionist aspect of T.D. theory, which ignores other elements that contribute to society progress in favor of concentrating only on technology, has also drawn criticism. Because people have the ability to choose how they use and interact with technology, critics also emphasize the significance of human free will in determining how technology affects society.

The T.D. theory's application to the impact of social media on the electorate's voting behavior in the 2023 Presidential Election: A Study of Etsako West Local Government Area (L.G.A.) suggests that social media platforms affect how people in Etsako West L.G.A. interact with political information, form opinions based on this information, and make decisions that could lead to social change. Social media can affect how people vote by influencing their perceptions of political candidates and issues through the spread of false information, exposure to specific content, and echo chambers. This was mostly observed during the run-up to the 2023 Auchi, Etsako West Local Government Area, presidential election, when many Auchi residents were endorsing Peter Obi, the candidate of the Labour Party (LP), as a result of social media debates regarding Obi's age, qualifications, and competence. Because these attributes were different from those of the other two well-known candidates, Atiku Abubakar of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and Bola Ahmed Tinubu of the All Progressives Congress (APC), Auchi, Etsako West L.G.A. residents were captivated by them. This support extended beyond social media; it partially encouraged people to cast ballots for Peter Obi. Unexpectedly, young people in Auchi, Etsako West L.G.A. who were politically indifferent turned out to vote, which led to a shift in society. The T.D. theory is extremely pertinent to comprehending how social media affects voters' voting behavior. Regarding the influence of social media on the voting behavior of the electorate, it suggests that social media platforms influence how people interact with politics, absorb political information, and develop opinions based on that information, which may influence election results and, consequently, lead to social change. Due in large part to social media's influence on their voting behavior, the youths of Auchi, Etsako West Local Government Area, who make up a larger portion of the population, realized how powerful their votes were in changing their society and, consequently, Nigeria in the 2023 presidential election.

METHODOLOGY

This study utilized both qualitative and quantitative approach. Quantitative research deals with accurately defining a research problem, collecting and evaluating numerical data from a primary source in order to characterize, forecast, or control variables of interest. With consideration for the purpose and objectives of the study, a well-structured, closed-ended questionnaire will be the main source of data. Qualitative research gathers and examines non-numerical data from sources like documents, interviews, and observations to learn more about the experiences, opinions, and actions of specific people or groups.

The study area which is Etsako West lies in the North-West of Edo State, Nigeria. Etsako West Local Government Area is a very important settlement because of its mineral deposits in Okpella – Limestone and Quartz. The local Governments Area is also known for its reputable tertiary institutions,

which are the Federal Polytechnic, Auchi and Edo State University, Uzairue, respectively. Auchi is one of the important settlements in Edo State, Nigeria. The town is located within latitudes 6.8°N and 7.2°N of the equator and longitudes 6.2°E and 6.4°E of the Greenwich meridian. It is bordered by Uzairue (Imeke and Jattu) in the North and North-East directions, by South Ibie in the East, Aviele in the South and Owan Local Government Area (Ivbiaro and Warrake) in the West and South West respectively. It is also bordered in the North West by Akoko-Edo (Ikpeshe). It is the administrative centre of Etsako West Local Government Area, Edo State, with an estimated population of over 300,000 people (Abdul Mutanebi & Hassan, 2013).

The target population of the study are the number of registered voters in the 2023 Presidential elections in Etsako West Local Government Area (L.G.A) which totaled to 48812 (INEC, 2023). Therefore, the population of this study is 48812.

In order to get a reliable sample size, Taro Yamani formula was used to determine the sample size. The Taro Yamani formula is a statistical formula used to calculate the sample size (n) for a sample survey, ensuring that the sample size is sufficient to represent the population with a desired level of precision. Taro Yamani formula is computed as when 'n' is sample size, 'N' is population size (48812) and 'e' is errorless tolerance (0.05)

$$n = N / (1 + Ne^2)$$

$$n = 48812 / 1 + 48812 (0.05^2)$$

$$n = 48812 / 123.03$$

$$n = 396.7 \text{ (approximately 397)}$$

The respondents for the study are 397 registered voters of Etsako West L.G.A in the 2023 Presidential Election. The study employed the simple random sampling technique, this technique allowed each and every member of the population accessible and made no pretence in identifying a representative subset of the population. This approach will give a representation of all registered voters in Etsako West L.G.A.

Instrument for Data Collection

The data collection instrument for the study was questionnaire. The questionnaire was tagged "The Impact of Social Media on the Voting Behaviour of Electorate in the 2023 Presidential Election: A Study of Etsako West L.G.A".

There were five and four closed-ended questions on the survey. The purpose of Section "A" is to look for demographic characteristics. A five-point Likert-type scale will be used in Section "B" to gather

voter feedback regarding the elements that affected their voting in the 2023 Etsako West L.G.A. presidential election. Additionally, Section 'C' will use a five-point Likert-type scale to gauge how much the electorate believes social media influenced their voting in the 2023 Etsako West L.G.A. presidential election. Lastly, Section 'D' will also be a four-point likert-type scale sought to know the impacts of social media in the 2023 Presidential Election in Etsako West L.G.A. The questionnaire was printed and distributed to respondents; they were assured of confidentiality and were asked to answer various questions. Participants answered and submitted to the researcher on the spot.

The extent to which a test assesses what it is intended to measure is known as the instrument's validity and reliability. In order to achieve this goal, the supervisor and co-supervisor validated the instrument by comparing the questions to the goals and determining that they were reliable and had content validity.

Method of Data Analysis

After administering a questionnaire to collect data, the information was evaluated, tallied, and examined in light of the study hypothesis. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze the information obtained from the questionnaire. The data was presented in tables as the explanation to them was presented in prose form. The mean of means and average standard deviation of each tables is presented in relation to the responses of participants. The mean statistics was used to test the hypotheses.

DATA ANALYSIS, RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The results of the analysis of the data gathered and the conclusions drawn from the study on the influence of social media on voters' voting behavior in the 2023 presidential election a study of Etsako West L.G.A. are presented in this section.

Table 1-Analysis of Response Rate

Questionnaire	Respondents	Percentage
Total distributed	397	100 %
Not Returned	0	0 %
Returned	397	100 %

Source: Field Data, 2025

Data Presentation and Analysis

The demographic information of the respondents was analyzed in this phase of the study, and it was recorded for three main variables.

Table 2- Demographic Section, n=397

VARIABLES	ITEMS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Sex	Male	243	61.2%
	Female	154	38.8%
Education	PhD	36	9.1%
	Masters	36	9.1%
	BSc	198	49.9%
	HND	63	15.9%
	ND	36	9.1%
	O' Level	28	7.1%
	School Leaving Certificate	-	-
Age	18-35	279	70.3%
	36-55	99	24.9%
	56-65	9	2.3%
	66-Above	10	2.5%

Source: Field Data, 2025

The table 2 above shows that most of the respondents; 61.2% of the respondents are males, 49.9% of the respondents are BSc holders, 70.3% are between the ages of 18-35 years old.

Research Objective: *Highlight whether social media had influence on the voting behaviour of electorate in the 2023 Presidential Election in Etsako West Local Government Area.*

Table 3: Influence of social media on the voting behaviour of electorate in the 2023 Presidential Election in Etsako West Local Government Area.

VARIABLE	Yes	Do Not Know	No	Total	
	F(%)	F(%)	F(%)	Mean	Standard Deviation
Did information on social media make you change your choice of	153 (38.5%)	27 (6.8%)	217 (54.7%)	1.84	0.95

Presidential candidate in the 2023 Presidential Election?					
Do you think majority of the population of registered voters in Etsako West L.G.A have access to social media?	117 (29.5%)	82 (20.7%)	198 (49.9%)	1.80	0.87
Do you view social media as an interactive platform which act as a major source of information for registered voters in Etsako West L.G.A?	252 (63.5%)	18 (4.5%)	127 (32.0%)	2.32	0.93
Do you believe social media brought information in a transparent and fast manner to registered voters in Etsako West L.G.A?	243 (61.2%)	72 (18.1%)	82 (20.7%)	2.41	0.81
Did social media play a huge role in your choice of candidate in the 2023 Presidential Election?	226 (56.9%)	18 (4.5%)	153 (38.5%)	2.18	0.96
Do you believe unverified information and various political propaganda were posted to the public through the social media?	369 (92.9%)	-	28 (6.8%)	2.86	0.50
Did the character of your choice of candidate get defamed on social media in the 2023 Presidential Election?	288 (72.5%)	27 (6.8%)	82 (20.7%)	2.52	0.82
Did social media enhance the interaction and communication between the Presidential aspirants and registered voters in Etsako West L.G.A?	208 (52.4%)	126 (31.7%)	63 (15.9%)	2.37	0.74
Did social media increase the popularity of Presidential aspirants among registered voters in Etsako West L.G.A in the 2023 Presidential election?	252 (63.5%)	100 (25.2%)	45 (11.3%)	2.52	0.69

Source: Field Data, 2025

Decision rule if mean is greater than 1.5=No, if greater than 2=Yes

From table 4.3, majority of the respondents do not agree that information on social media made them change their choice of Presidential candidate in the 2023 Presidential election (mean=1.84, SD=0.95) and they were also not of the believe that majority of registered voters in Etsako West L.G.A have access to social media (mean=1.8, SD=0.87). However, majority of the respondents viewed social media as an interactive platform which act as a major source of information for registered voters in Etsako West L.G.A (mean=2.32, SD=0.93), they were in the affirmative that social media brought information in a transparent and fast manner to registered voters in Etsako West L.G.A (mean=2.41, SD=0.81) and

they affirmed that social media played a huge role in your choice of candidate in the 2023 Presidential Election (mean=2.18, SD=0.96).

A vast majority of respondents affirmed that unverified information and various political propaganda are posted to the public through the social media (mean=2.86, SD=0.50) and they were in the affirmative that the character of their choice of candidate got defamed on social media in the 2023 Presidential Election (mean=2.52, SD=0.82). However, majority of respondents were in the affirmative that social media enhanced the interaction and communication between the Presidential aspirants and registered voters in Etsako West L.G.A (mean=2.37, SD=0.74) and they confirmed that social media increased the popularity of Presidential aspirants among registered voters in Etsako West L.G.A in the 2023 Presidential election (mean=2.52, SD=0.69).

Discussion of Findings

The findings shows that respondents' voting behaviour in the 2023 Presidential Election in Etsako West Local Government Area was influenced by social media through them viewing social media as an interactive platform which act as a major source of information for registered voters in Etsako West L.G.A, social media delivering information in a transparent and fast manner to registered voters in Etsako West L.G.A and social media playing a huge role in their choice of candidate in the 2023 Presidential Election. This is consistent with research by Igbinedion and Ajisebiyawo (2023), who found that social media influenced election results in the 2023 presidential election and increased voter turnout across a wide range of demographic, social, economic, and cultural factors. Additionally, Gabriel et al. (2022) confirmed in their study that "Twitter" is a social media platform that has a significant impact on young people. The study also discovered that "Twitter" was useful in improving voter behavior.

The results shows that respondents' recognise the impacts of social media in the 2023 Presidential Election in Etsako West Local Government Area. These impacts are both negative and positive impacts. The negative impacts which respondents' recognised are unverified information and various political propaganda being posted to the public through the social media and the character of their choice of candidate getting defamed on social media in the 2023 Presidential Election. Conversely, the positive impacts which respondents' recognised are social media enhancing the interaction and communication between the Presidential aspirants and registered voters in Etsako West L.G.A and social media increasing the popularity of Presidential aspirants among registered voters in Etsako West L.G.A in the 2023 Presidential election. The detrimental effects of social media in this study are exactly in line with those of Obarisiagbon's (2017) research, which discovered that Nigerian politicians and political parties have used these new platforms to discredit, intimidate, and marginalize political rivals, resulting in

political disputes and verbal warfare. In line with Obarisiagbon's research, Modibbo (2018) found that social media was used to incite hatred, propagate false rumors, and attack opponents. But according to Igbiniedion and Ajisebiyawo's (2023) research, social media platforms were effective instruments for the quick spread of political information during Nigeria's 2023 election process. They served as vital channels for political discourse, allowing information to reach a wider audience more quickly.

Through a hypothesis test, the study found that there are important elements that affected the electorate's voting behavior in the Etsako West Local Government Area during the 2023 presidential election. In the 2023 Presidential Election in Etsako West Local Government Area, the hypothesis that claimed there were no significant factors influencing voters' voting behavior was rejected, while the hypothesis that claimed there were significant factors influencing voters' voting behavior was accepted.

The study also revealed that social media had significant influence on the voting behaviour of electorate in the 2023 Presidential Election in Etsako West Local Government Area through a hypothesis test. The hypothesis that stated that social media had no significant influence on the voting behaviour of electorate in the 2023 Presidential Election in Etsako West Local Government Area was rejected while the hypothesis that stated that social media had significant influence on the voting behaviour of electorate in the 2023 Presidential Election in Etsako West Local Government Area was accepted.

Finally, the study found that social media had a major influence on the 2023 presidential election in the Etsako West Local Government Area. While the hypothesis that social media had no significant influence on the 2023 presidential election in Etsako West Local Government Area was rejected, the hypothesis that social media had a significant impact on the election was accepted.

Conclusion

Social media has a bigger role for raising awareness and educating people about our pluralist political system, regardless of the merits of other organizations like civil society. They serve as a constant way to inform voters about the attributes of specific candidates, political parties, and their platforms, as well as the election process as a whole. For better or worse, the pervasive use of several communication channels characterizes our era. These include the internet and conventional mass media for a variety of political and other reasons. It is evident from the study and interpretation that social media significantly influenced voters' choices in the Etsako West Local Government Area's 2023 presidential election. Political parties and candidates will be successful in influencing the populace of semi-urban areas and metro areas like Etsako West Local Government Area. Although social media is taking the place of traditional media, traditional media still plays a big role in raising awareness in rural areas. Even while

social media is taking the role of traditional media, it still has a significant impact on public awareness-raising in rural areas. People can connect with candidates and political parties they support through social media. It developed into a crucial marketing tool for getting the intended demographic in minimum time and less cost. Young electorate, particularly students, are greatly impacted by online banner ads and other forms of advertising, which not only influence them but also aid in determining how they will vote.

Recommendations

This study makes the following recommendations:

Election-related campaigns on social media should be continuous and free from vices such as spreading untrue rumors, spreading misinformation, and cyberbullying. This will considerably familiarize the electorate with all the prerequisites and procedures needed to become a voter. Once empowered, they have the most ease in freely carrying out their mandate.

In order to regain public trust, government organizations such as the National Orientation Agency (NOA) and other relevant parties should explore social media rather than relying too heavily on the mainstream media. Messages from the media should be supplemented by interpersonal communication that builds a direct link with the electorate. In order to raise awareness in rural communities, civil society can play a crucial role here by exhibiting drama.

Community voting should be replaced by individual voting after extensive empowerment, to avoid depriving the electorate of their civic rights. In the event that this occurs, our democracy is strengthened and affirmed since the electorate feels satisfied and can freely cast their votes for the candidates they desire rather than being controlled by godfathers and Chiefs.

The electorate need to understand that their choice of candidate will have a continual impact on their lives. They should therefore carefully cast their votes, independent of social, religious, and ethnic affiliations as well as other unimportant factors that have retrogressive tendencies.

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