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THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON ELECTION CAMPAIGN IN YOBE STATE (A STUDY OF 2019 GENERAL ELECTION)

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ABSTRACT

Nowadays, Technology runs almost all human endeavours, including politics. Technology and online communication are utilized for both political campaign and personal information gathering. Over the last decade, political election cycles have become more heavily dependent on the use of social media in electioneering campaign. This research study has examined the role of social media in the awareness, participation, and possible influence on the Nigerian electorate in their decision or choice of leadership during the 2019 general election. The method of data collection is qualitative by using face-to-face interview to gather data that are specific to the research themes. Findings show that the social media played a major role in mobilizing people, creating awareness, as well as participation and circulation of information about candidates. In conclusion, the perceptions of voters is attracted and won as a result of the online political activities displayed through social media by fellow supporters or candidates. It's therefore recommended, among other things, that regulatory methods on what should and should not be posted on social media should be put in place by the government regulatory bodies of various social media platforms.

Keywords: Role, Social media, Technology and Electioneering campaign

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INTRODUCTION

Globalization has made the world a global village as proposed by (Marshall-McLuhan, 1964), Information communication technologies (ICT) were needed to facilitate the globalization of the world. Consequently, brings about the conception of social media platforms to further connect people all over the world via information system. Social media as a product of global revolution, and an end product of globalization has in turn, brought about social and political changes in the world.

According to Farrar-Myers et al. (2015), over the last decade, political campaigns have increasingly used social media to help shape the public's perceptions of candidates. Social media is an online communication network which allows the public to produce original content through platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter among others. While each platform offers the public various means of expressions, all platforms are centered on the idea of social networking. These are because of the great achievement in utilizing social media during political campaigns, and arose the interest of voters, candidates toward normalizing the use of social media in political campaigning as a conventional system.

STATEMENT OF PROBLEMS

The problems associated with the usage of social media in elections in Yobe State are quite cumbersome. Among which are:

1. Acquiring and access to social media tools does not cover the entire state particularly rural areas. (Ermann, et al. 2018).
2. Expose the entire life of candidates when they vie for political seats (Brader, T. 2006).
3. Opposition parties may found many politicians in question to compromising positions with their words and phrases taken out of context and magnified to large proportions in order to discredit their opponents (Titus-Fannie et al, 2013).

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

What role did social media play in the political participation during the 2019 General elections in Yobe State?

What lapses were observed in the use of social media for election campaign in political participation during the 2019 General elections in Yobe State?

How can social media be effectively utilized for well-organized election campaign in Yobe State future election?

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objective of this study is to assess the role and impact of social media on the 2019 Electioneering campaign in Yobe State General elections. These are:

- To examine the role of social media played in the political participation during the 2019 General elections in Yobe State.
- To examine the lapses in the use of social media for election and electioneering campaign during the 2019 General elections in Yobe State.
- To determine the effective utilization of social media for efficient election campaign in Yobe State future election.

METHODOLOGY

POPULATION OF THE STUDY

Polit and Hungler (1999), refer to the population as an aggregate or totality of all the objects, subjects or members that conform to a set of specifications. In this study the population was Yobe State, the State is located in North-Eastern Nigeria with 17 Local Government Areas. However, due to limited time the research is focus on only Damaturu local government.

SAMPLE SIZE

A general rule of the thumb is to always use the largest sample possible. The larger the sample the more representative it is going to be smaller samples produce less accurate results because they are likely to be less representative of the population (LoBiondo-Wood & Haber 1998). The researchers interview 20 respondents using non probability sampling, I will sort the population into 2 categories i.e 10 elderly and 10 youths.

INSTRUMENT FOR DATA COLLECTION

"All data collected for a specific purpose by the researcher from the field are known as primary data. The most important methods of collecting primary data are: questionnaire, interview, observation." Chukwuemeka (2002) cited in Akinlade (2016). This study used the interview as instrument to solicit responses from the research sample elements on the role of social media in election campaign and the social media usage upon their political participation.

TABLE: Respondents Table

CODE	FREQUENCY	CATEGORY		CODE	FREQUENCY	CATEGORY
R1	Respondent 1	Elder		R11	Respondent11	Youth
R2	Respondent 2	Elder		R12	Respondent12	Youth
R3	Respondent 3	Elder		R13	Respondent13	Youth

R4	Respondent 4	Elder		R14	Respondent14	Youth
R5	Respondent 5	Elder		R15	Respondent15	Youth
R6	Respondent 6	Elder		R16	Respondent16	Youth
R7	Respondent 7	Elder		R17	Respondent17	Youth
R8	Respondent 8	Elder		R18	Respondent18	Youth
R9	Respondent 9	Elder		R19	Respondent19	Youth
R10	Respondent10	Elder		R20	Respondent20	Youth

RESULTS/ DISCUSSION

The result of this study was presented in accordance to the research themes. The essence was to ensure clarity and free flow of ideas of the respondents which was grouped according to the youth and the elderly people and were presented in a tabular form using code to represent respondent as R.

The role of social media in the political participation during the 2019 election.

Based on the views of the respondents the social media play a vital role in political participation during 2019 election.

'Social media provides an avenue through which people are reached in the society anytime about the political campaign policies' (R1).

'The social media platform can reach all individuals irrespective of tribe, religion, sex, educational background that attract political participation' (R2).

'The social media provides a platform for the target audience to be reached at almost zero cost. The huge sum that is usually spent in mobilization is reduced' (R3).

'Social media platforms are predominantly used to sell-out the political manifesto and also gain support from the populace' (R4).

'Social media platforms like Twitter and Facebook is gathering large number of followers and intimating them on planned policies and programmes of political parties' (R5).

'Social media platforms instigate people to participate in a particular party or candidate through policies and programmes of that political party advertised to them' (R6).

'Social media platforms introduce a voter to a political party by winning his interest based on the laid down policies of that particular party' (R7).

'Social media platforms instigate people to participate in a particular party or candidate through policies and programmes of that political party advertised to them' (R8).

'Social media is dramatically reducing cost of political campaigns using small data unlike before where printing media is costing a lot' (R9).

'Social media market their manifesto to gain support from the populace' (R10).

'Social media is very important in politics because most politicians use to adopt different approach to express their political views' (R11).

'Social media is used in expressing political policies in electioneering campaign and Facebook as most suitable' (R12).

'The respondents reported that they express their political views in visual with the hope that other social media users will see it and form opinion from same' (R13).

'Social media have played a significant role in changing the face of political communication globally' (R14).

'Social media is the fastest way of reaching the public and politicians engaged in posting their political campaign through it' (R15).

'As social media occupies a central place there exists a paradigm shift in political communication as a result of the emergence of social media' (R16).

'Social media is scattered all over the country and even beyond in introducing political issues' (R17).

'The social media grab the target audience to be reached about political campaigns' (R18).

No Idea (R19).

'Social media occupies a central place there exists a paradigm shift in political communication as a result of the emergence of social media' (R20)

The role of social media in mobilising people to vote during the 2019 General elections in Yobe State?

The respondents that were interviewed perceive that social media play a vital role during 2019 election

'During the 2019 General elections in Yobe state mobilisation of peoples by the social media makes a big role to provide effective means for voters to connect with political parties' (R1).

'The interaction in social media helps the politicians to make trust among the voters and for them to be voted' (R2).

'The citizen gather needed information and knowledge about the political parties on social media that helps them to make voting decisions' (R3).

'Establishment of convincing policies and trust is made essentially in this process that increases the number of supporters' (R4).

'The social media campaign is an effective process that helps political candidates to have confidence among voters which has significant impact in enhancing political mobilization' (R5).

'The social media world entails political campaign from the grassroots level and endeavour to gain massive political mobilisation' (R6).

'Use of social media in posting or advertising candidate policies attracts voters in order to choose their political candidate to be voted for during elections which has great impact on political participation and mobilization' (R7).

'Social media allow political mobilisation through the advertisement of candidate or party' (R8).

'People are posting or advertising politicians in order mobilise to choose their political candidate' (R11).

'Peoples living in the urban and rural centres embraced the used of social media for political purposes instead of prints media i.e. magazines and newspapers' (R12).

'It enhances, encourages and it places awareness particularly to the Urban people on policies of a political candidate or party' (R13).

'Social media users in Nigeria collectively elaborate visuals for the purpose of communicating among themselves as a suitable means for mobilisation' (R14).

'Social media are used for political campaigns and enable full participation and mobilization toward a party based on the enlisted policies' (R16).

'Social media enable people to advertise politicians so as to gain support from the populace to choose their political candidate' (R18).

'Social media furnishes people essentially about political candidate and party in both urban and rural areas impress and win their interest to that party or candidate' (R19).

'It enhances awareness particularly to the urban people on policies of a political candidate or party' (R20).

The influence of social media on the outcome of 2019 general election

Based on the response of participants the social media influence election

'The use of social media has changed the process and patterns of peoples thinking' (R1).

'Social media helps to understand the ardent wish of the voters which influence and change the voting behaviour of citizens' (R2).

'The perception of people can be known to the other parties via social media content' (R3).

'Nowadays most of the citizens are using social media and online platform to transmit or gathering information about a political party which has an effect on influencing the outcome of elections' (R4).

'The social media platforms allow voters interact with and publish to each other about political views needed to be elected' (R5).

'Social media helps to express the ardent wish of a candidate or party which influences and change the outcome of elections' (R7).

'The yearning and aspirations of political parties can be presented to the other parties via social media content and influence the outcome of election' (R9).

'People are posting or advertising politicians in order to choose their political candidate which can significantly influences the outcomes of election' (R11).

'Social media meant that even untrained citizens could share their objectives on the election experiences that influence the outcome of election' (R12).

'The accessibility, low cost and possible anonymity of social media is meant that some were able to cross group lines to interact with others of different orientation and influence the outcome of election' (13).

'Social media is use to transmit fake news during 2019 general elections and other social media challenges that affect the outcome of election' (R14).

'Social media identify potentially influential voices and accounts which might be important to engage with or listen to' (R15).

'Social media clearly provides an excellent opportunity for citizens to contribute to election monitoring. Campaigns in the lead-up to elections or other flash points to educate people on how to use social media to monitor / communicate (for example, using certain hash-tags, accounts, adding location data) could increase the volume of citizen engagement in the election process' (R16).

'Social media to identify multimedia citizen generated information about events' (R17).

'The perception of people can be known to the other parties via social media content' (R18).

'Today most of the citizen is using social media and online platform for gathering information about a particular decision that influence their participation in election' (19).

'Social media provides voters with potentially influential voices of political candidates or party which might be important to engage with and support them' (R20).

Methods and utilization of social media to reduce political conflicts during the 2019 general election.

Majority of the respondents belief that utilisation of social media reduce political violence during 2019 election.

'Social media should influence public awareness both positively and negatively' (R1).

'Social media is to make it possible to educate voters, encourage participation in the electoral process, and advocate peaceful acceptance of the result' (R2).

'Campaign from the grassroots about peace is to be communicated with both victims and perpetrators of violence on a large scale that the vote is not a fight' (R3).

'Social media should be used to announce that every radio station in the country is to contribute air time for peace messaging' (R4).

'The use of Twitter, Facebook and Whatsapp also increased the credibility of the poll, by enabling election information to flow freely between citizens across the country' (R5).

'Regulators fine on broadcasting organisations that contravened the National Union of Journalists' (NUJ) Code of Conduct' (R6).

'Penalties incurred to those inciting any form of agitations should not be covered by the political sponsors' (R7).

'Social media is used to educate voters and encourage participation in the election and advocate peaceful acceptance of the result' (R9).

'Social media encourages participation in the electoral process thereby understanding clearly about the poll and peacefully accepting the result' (R10).

'Looking back to our previous politician's back then on how they conduct their campaign before and during elections, they usually use political thugs to disrupt and destruct ballot box at the polling units and mostly snatched the ballot boxes, but with the emergence of social media and its adoption to politics has reduced the conflict/violent during elections' (R11).

'Social media platforms is used by politicians for the purpose of posting their manifesto should be guided by rules and regulations that punish anyone found with offensive statement, or posting Fake-news and bad mouthing about opposition party or candidate' (R12).

'Establishment of certain rules that is govern on the social media users and to abide by the set rules and regulation for both politicians and the followers' (R13).

'Government should establish law that can punish those bad eggs who are collecting money from opponent and go to social media to tarnish the image of the other opponent' (R14).

'Government is to regulate the social media and other online platforms through adaptation of a proposed code of practice for interactive computer' (R15).

'Federal Government to punish those asking politicians for money or they use social media and post things that will portray you in bad light' (R17).

'Social media increase the credibility of the poll, by enabling election information to flow freely between citizens across the country' (R19).

'The social media is to wisely avoid the spread of slurs on behalf of political interests, and comments that incited ethnic tension' (R20).

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

From the analysis and interpretation, it is clear that social media plays a significant impact on campaign and voting process. Political parties are motivating and influencing the people from rural and urban areas. Social media is replacing the traditional media but in remote areas traditional media still has significant impact in creating awareness among people during election campaign in Yobe State 2019 general elections.

Social media provides platforms to people to get connected to parties of their choices. Thus it's became an important marketing tool that reach to the target audience in shortest time and with less cost. Online banners adds and other form of advertisements has a significant impact on youth especially students, which is not only to influence them but also help in shaping their behavior and interest toward a political party. People use social media platform during election to keep track of political development. Technology plays a vital role in giving first-hand information in shortest possible time.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the social media has gradually found its way into our day-to-day activities and in the end, it has affected and influence the way individuals go about various activities. Moreover, social media has helped organisations in awareness and even fast in advertisement. It has also help to propagate religious activities, medical activities as well as political activities as a whole. With regard to this study, social media has been identified to have played a vital role in the awareness, mobilization, and participation of electorates and even keeping check of electoral candidates. Regardless of the fact that social media could be affected by factors such as affordability, accessibility, acceptability, availability, and usability in some parts of Nigeria, it still has a dominating effect during electioneering campaigns. However, the social media, holds a glitter of hope and wields the power to control information to the end users changing the hitherto status-quo as most of the electorates are subscribed to various social media platforms.

RECOMMENDATIONS

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Social media will serve as tool not only to combat electoral violence but ensure peace building during election and voting process and to enhance its influence in electioneering and elections, the following recommendations were to be made:

- Nigeria's political leaders and aspirants should desist from using the social media to spread false stories, hate speeches, caricature figures etc. on other candidates that will destroy their public image. Rather, they should portray what they have to offer to the masses.
- Regulatory procedures on what should and should not be posted on social media should be put in place by the governing bodies of various social media platforms. This will help to censor and verify information that is spread on social media platforms. Consequently, campaigns that use and encourage hate speeches or instil violence will not be posted or published.
- Measures should to be put in place by the communication bodies of Nigeria such that users who attempt to exploit the faceless nature of the internet would be tracked and strictly penalized.

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