



Nigeria's Social Media Culture: Exploring Civic Participation of Youths in the 2015 Presidential Election

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Abstract

The global expansions in the use of social media accessed on mobile technologies have brought about extraordinary opportunities in society and enabled a new trend in political communication, especially among youths. Interestingly, a new public sphere of social connectedness and discussion is apparently developing, with the dawn of social media in Nigeria. The political participation of Nigerian youth and their presence on social media via mobile technologies was, therefore, put on scholarship radar in order to determine how much influence it exerts on the polity. Using survey research method and hinged on the Technological Acceptance Model, this study investigated how young people in three states of Enugu, Anambra and Ogun states were politically stimulated to participate during the 2015 Presidential Elections with respect to their social media presence accessed on mobile technologies. After a survey of 300 youths, purposively selected from the three selected states, results indicate that numerous mobile text messages and social media updates sent by politicians during the campaign influenced their voting decisions, though with a minimal effect. The study, thus, recommends that media educate the polity on the potentialities of mobile technologies in governance so that they can effectively utilize it as a political communication tool for political development in Nigeria.

Key Words: Media Culture, Mobile Media Technologies, Nigerian 2015 Election, Political Participation, Social Media.

Introduction

The fundamental pervasive nature of the social media today and its centrality in human communication has actually made it a precursor of modernity. Social media are ubiquitously used and are becoming interwoven with various sectors of society at an alarming rate (van Dijck & Poell, 2015). The place of social media in almost every sector of the economy and society has transcended into a form of cyber culture. Today we have viral communities with cultural traits and ways of life. Although this evolution started with the advent of cellular phones, it seems like it's been there for ages as people have gotten accustomed to communicating messages and ideas on social media. This explains why every young Nigerian apparently, strive to own a smartphone and have a social media account. The first ten years of social media gave rise to an online infrastructure which shaped the organization of societies and publics to large extents (van Dijck & Poell, 2015). Social media is, therefore, assumed to have a great impact on civic and political participation in Nigeria which can be described as a new media culture.

The Nigerian society used to be passive observers of information in the past, but not anymore today. The development of internet and mobile technology actually, created new possibilities for the provision and consumption of multimedia information in society (Drula, 2014). Okonji (2015) affirms that the tempo at which GSM was adopted culminated to its swift growth in the number of subscribers from a paltry 400,000 lines before 2001, to an enormous 135 million active lines by December 2014. Even at that, the Jumia Mobile Report, 2018 showed that Nigeria is fast becoming a mobile-first country. The report demonstrates that, out of about "1.04 billion and 82 percent mobile subscriptions in Africa, Nigeria with an estimated 193 million population, has 162 million mobile subscriptions, which amount to 84 percent of the population" (Jumia Mobile Report, 2018). There were also, about 21

million smartphone users with only 17 million smartphone users active on social media via their mobile phones in 2017 according to the Report. This implies that mobile technology is indeed pervasive which should equally enhance the usage of social media in the country which has especially for electoral purposes.

The number of internet users in the country also increased to 98 million with a 65% penetration in 2017 compared to 53% in 2016 according to the Jumia report. Vanguardngr.com however, corroborates the Jumia Report, which predicted a 100 percent mobile penetration in 2019 based on the ever increasing number of affordable phones entering the Nigerian market, and the accelerated rate of mobile adoption among the public (vanguardngr.com). This clearly indicates a high evolving internet adoption rate in Nigeria. It is equally an improvement of communication flow considering the potentials of the internet and social media.

Research has also shown that mobile devices enable quicker and easier access to information as more people utilize their mobile devices in accessing news sites and reading news (Drula 2014; Bosomworth in Drula 2014). This could explain why social media and mobile devices were employed prominently in the 2011 and 2015 general elections in Nigeria as veritable tools of civic vitality and political mobilization. Omojola and Morah (2014, p. 2) agree that “strong relationships exist between the media and politics”, however, the “media can only impact positively or negatively when its target audience has consumed the media content” (p.4). Thus, the electorates can be mobilized to participate in electoral activities through social media accessed on mobile format if they have access to political contents disseminated on mobile devices like cell phones (that is very handy and affordable), social networks or even smartphone that allow high interactive.

In Nigeria, about 32.4 percent of its population also constitutes of young population who are below the age of 18 years amidst a total population of about 193 million people (NPC 2006). These young populations are mostly youths who fall within the voting age in line with constitutional provisions. The Nigerian National Youth policy (2001, sec 1.2), even categorizes youths as comprising all young person between the ages 18 and 35 years who are citizens of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. The Federal Ministry of Youth Development in a report termed: 2012 National Youth Baseline Survey Report, however, estimated the population of Nigeria youths (15 – 35years) to be 64.1 million. This implies that most young Nigerians were born in the new media age and are likely to access information on social media especially those on elections and political matters.

Generally, societies are becoming increasingly attuned to using social media in conducting elections in this 21st century. The techno-savvy nature of youths and the level of participation they display during elections have equally opened up a new vista in the field of political communication. The Nigerian general election of 2015 that was the 5th quadrennial election to be held in the country since the end of military rule in 1999, in fact, witnessed the use of social media extensively for campaigns. This provided a new public sphere to the candidates and the electorates to actively participate in the electoral process. This paper, therefore, attempts to empirically explore the level of civic participation of youths in the electoral process with a view to discovering their level of involvement with social media use on mobile during the election.

The Problem

Mobile technologies present a fresh dimension to political communication in Nigeria. Social media are already changing the way political aspirants attract supporters. Research has shown that most Nigerians have mobile phones and there is increasing access to the internet through various channels (Jumia Report, 2018). Ekwenchi, Morah and Adum (2015) had noted that in 2013, Nigeria had a mobile broadband penetration rate of 10.1 percent and occupied the 93rd position in global ranking as well as the 101st position in the worldwide percentage of individuals using the Internet in line with International Telecommunication Union (ITU) Broadband Commission Report 2014. This shows a rise in new media technology usage in the country, especially among youths.

The increasing visibility of social media accessed on mobile devices and the link with political participation, however, should present a platform for intellectual exploration. Considering the fact that Nigeria on 28th March 2015 held its presidential election, which elected President Muhammadu Buhari into power after months of some political media campaign. It became imperative, therefore, to adequately examine the relationship between mobile phone, and social media usage to the political participation of young Southern Nigerians in the 2015 election; and the extent of this use.

Research Objectives and Questions

This study broadly aims to find out how political participation of Nigerian youth on mobile social media contributed to voting decisions during the 2015 elections; and how much influence those decisions exerted on the polity. To this end, the following research questions helped to signpost the study:

1. Which GSM network service is most preponderant to youths on mobile devices?
2. Which social media are most popularly accessed by youths on mobile devices?
3. Which social media accessed on mobile technologies served as most useful for political public forums among Nigerian youths?
4. How instrumental was social media on mobile devices to youth's response to political messages and activities during the 2015 presidential election in Nigeria?

Mobile Media Technology

Mobile media technologies have continued to be a key enabler of economic and social development all over the world which is also not limited to the youths. Recent 2017 ITU Reports indicate that in 104 countries, more than 80% of the youth populations are online (ITU, 2017). The Report also found that 94% of young people aged 15-24 in developed countries use the Internet compared with 67% in developing countries, and only 30% used in the least Developed Countries (LDCs). The proportion of young people aged 15-24 using the Internet (71%) is significantly higher than the proportion of the total population actually using the Internet (48%); while young people represent almost one-fourth of the total number of individuals using the Internet worldwide (ITU, 2017).

The Report also found that in LDCs, 35% of the individuals who use the Internet are, however, young people aged 15-24, compared with 13% in developed countries and 23% globally. These figures clearly indicate that young people actively use the internet from their mobile devices and; is equally a great improvement in global internet use when compared to past reports. For instance, an ITU 2014 report had estimated that more than 50 percent of the world population would access the Internet within three years. Formerly, the speculation in this ITU report was that over 2.3 billion people would access mobile broadband by end of 2014, to climb sharply to a predicted 7.6 billion five years later. These predictions have actually come to pass as there are now three times as many mobile broadband connections today as there are conventionally fixed broadband subscriptions globally, especially in Nigeria (Jumia Report, 2018). The popularity of broadband-enabled social media applications, therefore, continues to soar, as there were more than 2.62 billion people active on social networks in 2018 (statista.com). This obviously indicated that mobile media usage has generally almost become widespread, especially among young people.

Research as well show that mobile media has much potential which makes it apt for effective political communication and campaign (Ekwenchi, Morah & Adum, 2015; Morah & Omojola, 2018). Mobile media-supported communication (Wei, 2013) equally provides a means to access much information on the internet as a result of media convergence. Wei (2013) points that consumption of mobile news is highly personalized and subject to the control of mobile device owners under this dispensation. Mobile media use also has a link to social media use as most people tend to access the web on mobile according to studies. Donner and Gitau (Humphreys, 2013) agree that when people access the Internet with their phones, obviously, they often use social media. This implies that political campaign messages can possibly boom through mobile social media communications, especially among young people that are commonly most noticeably found online. In addition, since young Nigerians acclimatize easily with technological trends, such as mobile devices (as millennial) (Morah & Omojola, 2018), the choice of using social media for political communication is, therefore, deemed as appropriate. For McMahon & Pospisil (2005), millennial are regarded as heavy users of cell phones who must have using mobile technology devices for texting, e-mailing, and accessing the Web and interactive media since childhood.

Political Participation and Social Media

The political sphere is experiencing significant transformation since the advent of mobile and social media as earlier stated. Political aspirants now reach their prospective voters through phone calls, mobile text messages, social media chats, and online post and updates. Globally, social media penetration is vast and increasing with Facebook, for instance, over 1.86 billion monthly active users in 2018 (statista.com). Data published on Pew Research Center data affirms that most Americans are increasingly accessing news through social media despite concerns about its accuracy (journalism.org). Donner and Gitau (Humphreys, 2013) as well found that in places like South Africa, it is cheaper to send a message via mobile social media, like MXit, than it is to send an SMS. Obviously in Nigeria, using mobile social media apps such as Whatsapp and Facebook messengers are free and cheaper than sending an SMS

text or email. This perceptibly underlines that mobile social media apps can be effectively deployed by political candidates to reach many people due to its reduced cost.

Social media technology has greatly permeated most aspects of our lives, especially that of the young generation. Olabamiji (2014) believes that social media is now a part of young people's political culture. Today, youths apparently rely on the internet for diverse types of information including political information, probably because of ease of use and cost. Even in America, research indicates that social media was found to be preponderantly used for news sources due to its ease of use (convenience) (21%); and interactivity (8%) in 2018 (www.journalism.com). It could, therefore, be stated that the vast amount of political information available to youths on the internet will probably propel them to actively get involved in politics. Rahmawati, (2014) agrees knowledge about politics could be acquired through political learning via various sources including exposure to political information on social media. Vreese and Boomgarden (2006) argue that youths' political knowledge and participation in politics are very important to the democratic process in every country as the acquisition of political knowledge is actually a strong predictor of political participation.

Studies also reveal that political participation in Africa is highly gendered, as men are significantly more politically active than women (Omojola & Morah, 2014; García-Peñalosa & Konte, 2013; Isaksson 2010) especially under the traditional mass media dispensation. Even at that, García-Peñalosa & Konte, (2013, p.8), assume a possibility that "traditional gender attitudes see only men as entitled to have political opinions; implying that women would not have a view on the desirability or not of democratization". Social media platforms being a free and interactive medium are, thus, most likely to even favor equal gender participation due to its ease of use and access. This will make more women become more interested in politics. Such changes in media use pattern, will, of course, culminate to increased online political participation in Nigeria. Jensen (2010) corroborates that the Internet presently possesses unique potentials to improve civic engagement and democracy unlike what obtains in the traditional mass media.

Social Media Culture and Nigerian Elections

The Nigerian Electoral Act No.6, 2010 (amended in 2015 as the Principal Act) which is the legal framework governing the conduct of elections in Nigeria Act did not provide specific guidelines on the use of social media in elections, although it contains a number of sections that made references to the use of electronic media in the conduct of elections. The 2010 and 2015 amended Electoral Acts (placing.org) stipulations, however, did not clearly include social media as a medium of political communication, even though scholarly definitions (van Dijck & Poell, 2015, Baran, 2009) shows that social media is certainly, electronic. Social media was initially used in the 2011 Nigerian general elections as a political communication tool (PLAC, 2012, p.2).

There were three major issues which underlined the great use of social media tools during the 2011 elections according to PLAC, 2012 report. Firstly, the use of social media in Nigeria's 2011 elections reflects a global trend towards "internet elections" or "e-electioneering" (Macnamara in PLAC, 2012, p.3). Another reason was the propensity of some Nigerian politicians to harness the social media opportunities for their online campaigning. This happened during the 2011 general elections, when many politicians, particularly presidential aspirants, used social media tools to connect with voters and their constituency.

In the present digital age, therefore, it is not surprising that some Nigerian politicians are equally engulfed in the euphoria of social and mobile devices advancements. They often resort to social media as a means of political campaigning; to communicate their manifestoes and garner votes. Facebook and Twitter were generally observed to be the most widely used social media platforms by the politicians. Studies show that Goodluck Jonathan had nearly 300,000 fans on his Facebook page in December 2010 (Ekine as cited in PLAC, 2012). Observation similarly showed that other presidential aspirants like Atiku Abubakar, Ibrahim Shekarau, Nuhu Ribadu, Ibrahim Babangida, and Dele Momodu operated Twitter and other social media accounts as well as some political parties such as Congress for Progressive Change (CPC), Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN) and Peoples Democratic Party (PDP).

This obviously indicates that even before the 2015 general elections, Nigerian politicians have become accustomed to using social media for election purposes. PLAC (2012) notes that another issue that underscores the use of social media in Nigeria's 2011 elections was the predisposition of Nigerian civil society and the electorate to adopt social media as a tool for improving the effectiveness of election observation to overcome past ugly precedent. Prior to the 2011 elections in Nigeria, negative issues like vote-rigging and other electoral malpractices normally arise. The reason is, however, conspicuous as research shows that the 2003 and 2007 elections were predominantly marked with some disappointment by candidates, voters, and observers (PLAC, 2012).

Ibrahim & Ibeanu (PLAC, 2012) also argue that Nigerian elections were characterized by issues such as grabbing of ballot boxes from election officials; disenfranchisement of prospective voters; the filling of the boxes with invalid ballot papers, as well as claim of plot between election officials and politicians to change election results and undermine popular mandate. The convenience,

interactivity and participatory nature of social media on mobile devices, is, therefore, seen as great succor to combating those ugly electoral precedents.

Theoretical Framework

The Technological Acceptance Model (TAM) originally proposed by Fred Davis in 1986 which explains how users accept and utilize technologies (Morah & Omojola, 2018) forms the theoretical base of this study. The model suggests that some factors influence user's decisions about how and when they will use technologies when they are presented with new technology. Chuttur (Morah & Omojola, 2018) propose that users' motivation can be explained by three factors: perceived ease of use; perceived usefulness and attitude toward using the system. He argues that the attitude of a user towards a system is a major determinant of whether the user will actually use or reject the system. Davis, Bagozzi, and Warshaw (1989, p.997) corroborate Chutter that, the use of the computer by people can be predicted precisely from their plan as perceived usefulness can determine the intention of people to use computers. Perceived ease of use is also, chiefly a secondary condition for people's intention to use computers.

TAM in this study transposes to how young people in Anambra, Enugu, and Ogun states used mobile devices to access campaign messages on social media during the 2015 presidential election as a result of their perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness; and even as generally accepted communication and media devices in Southern Nigeria.

Method, Population, Sampling, and Instrumentation

The study adopted the survey research method to investigate how young people in three states in Southern Nigerian were politically activated to participate in the April 2015 presidential elections on the instrumentality of social media connected via mobile devices. Three rural communities in three states were purposively selected comprising: Anambra with a population size of 4,055,048 residents; Enugu state (population of 3,267,837) and Ogun state with a population of 3,751,140 residents (NPC, 2006). The three Local Government Areas (LGAs) in the selected states which comprise Awka South, Enugu East, and Sango Ota were studied using a purposive sampling method to investigate mobile social media use during the election period. The three LGAs were chosen for two main reasons. One is the location of three large universities that is: Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka; Caritas University, Emene and Covenant University, Ota, which has a predominant youth population apt for this study in the LGAs. Next is the residence of an even larger population of other young artisans and business people who were assumed to be active mobile social media users in the LGAs.

The population of study, therefore, comprises residents of the three communities in three selected states out of which a sample of 300 residents of Awka South comprising Okpuno, Amansea and Ifite Awka; Enugu East comprising Iji Nike, Owo and Emene; and Ado Odo/Ota comprising Owu, Awori and Sango were drawn; using purposive sampling technique to represent the entire population. According to the 2006 census (NPC, 2006), the population of Ota is 163,783 residents; that of Enugu East is 279,089; while Awka South has a population of 189,049 residents. This implies that the overall population of the study area comprised 631,921 residents of the three selected local government areas. The decision to adopt a purposive sampling in selecting 300 respondents from three LGAs was taken because; though there was a heavy concentration of voters who participated during the last presidential election political activities in the states, it is not everyone that has a mobile phone; and even a social media account.

Primary data were thus collected by means of a questionnaire specially developed for this study. The questionnaire was developed and piloted before distribution in order to validate the contents in terms of validity, logic, and accuracy. The final version of the questionnaire which was distributed using face-to-face technique consisted of two parts. The first part of the questionnaire was designed to identify the demographic characteristic of the respondents such as gender, age, sex, and educational background while the other contains a series of questions about major research questions guiding the study.

Findings, Data Analysis, and Discussions

The data analyzed was obtained from copies of the questionnaire distributed face to face among youths from three states Local council areas of Awka South comprising Okpuno, Amansea, and Ifite Awka; Enugu East comprising Iji Nike, Owo and Emene and Ado Odo/Ota comprising Owu, Awori, and Sango. Out of 300 copies of the questionnaire distributed, 249 representing a response rate of 83% was completed and returned. Analyses of data are presented below on the thematic and demographic variables underlying this study using SPSS data analysis software.

Demographic Data

In terms of the age of the respondents, results from the study indicated that 189 of the respondents sampled representing 77.8% are youths between the age brackets of 18-22 years; 46 respondents representing 18.9% are within age brackets 23-28 years. Other age brackets samples is a negligible 3.3%, representing age brackets 29-40 years. It is obvious that a good proportion of the respondents are youths. Out of the selected sample investigated, 128 representing 54.2% are females while 108 representing 45.8% are males. Meanwhile results equally show that majority (195) of the youths sampled representing 81.3% are single while 45 respondents represented by 18.7% are married which implies that most of the youths used for the study are single. Most of the respondents are educated as findings reveal that 168 respondents used in the study have attained tertiary education, 7.4% secondary education, 7.0%, primary education while 2.0% indicated they are not literate. This implies that most of the respondents are young people who are educated to a large extent and are, therefore, likely to be social media literate and compliant.

RQ1 Which GSM network service is most preponderant to the youth on mobile devices?

Analysis of data from findings shows that 252 respondents representing 84% make use of mobile phones more than all other mobile devices. Nineteen respondents representing 6.3% make use of laptop and computers; 15 respondents representing 5% use pagers mostly; while 11 and 3 respondents representing 4% and 1% respectively indicated that they use tablets and PDAs mostly. The implication of this finding is that more than three-quarter of the respondents are using mobile phones more than other devices.

Table 1: Service providers used by respondents on mobile device

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
MTN	169	68.2%
GLO	6	2.4%
Airtel	37	14.9%
Etisalat	36	14.5%
Total	248	100%

Data from table 1 above indicates that 169 respondents representing 68.2% make use of MTN services, 37 and 36 respondents representing 14.9% and 14.5%, respectively use Airtel and Etisalat services while only six respondents representing 2.4% use GLO services. This finding indicates that MTN is the most preferred service used by respondents. This further goes to show the popularity of the MTN service over other service providers in Nigeria.

RQ2 which social media is the most popularly accessed by youth on mobile devices in Nigeria?

Table 2: Activities Respondents Use Their Mobile Device For

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Making call	93	37.3%
Sending e-mails	3	1.2%
Browsing	55	22.1%
Social networking	55	22.1%
SMS	10	4%
Others	37	15%
Total	249	100%

Table 2 indicates that 93 respondents representing 37.3% use their mobile device for making calls. Fifty-five respondents representing 22.1%, respectively browse as well as engage in social networking with their mobile device, while only 13

respondents representing a total of 5.2% use their mobile devices for sending e-mails and SMS. Making voice calls was, therefore, the most predominant activity most respondents use their mobile devices to perform.

Table 3: Respondents most popularly used social networking sites on a mobile device

Variables	Popularity on social networking		Social networking frequently visited by respondents	
Facebook	101	40.7%	146	59.1%
2go	5	2.0%	20	8.1%
Twitter	8	3.2%	29	11.7%
Blogging	12	4.8%	23	9.3%
MySpace	2	1.4%	3	1.3%
Whatsapp	121	48.9%	26	10.5%
Total	249	100%	247	100%

Data in Table 3 shows that a greater 121 respondents representing 48.9% indicated they popularly use WhatsApp social networks followed by 101 respondents represented by 40.7% who indicated that Facebook is their most popular social network. Other responses include blogging, which has 12 respondents representing 4.8%; sixteen respondents representing 3.2% who agreed that Twitter is their most popular social network; while 5 and 2 respondents representing 2.0% and 1.4% respectively identified 2go and MySpace as their most popular networks. This shows that among youths in Anambra, Enugu and Ogun states, Whatsapp is their most popularly used social network sites followed by Facebook.

Further investigations in terms of the platform they visit often with their mobile devices on Table3, however, reveal that respondents visit Facebook more than any other social network site. This is shown by 146 respondents representing 59.1 percent. The findings of this study are congruent with earlier studies that have indicated that youths are very familiar with and engage much in Facebook with friends and acquaintances (Kenechukwu, Morah & Uzochukwu, 2012). This may be because it is cheaper than making calls to contact friends. Other social networking sites, which respondents use their mobile devices to access include Twitter represented by 29 (11.3%); blogs represented by 23 (9.3%); 2go represented by 20 (8.1%); WhatsApp represented by 26 (10.5%); and MySpace 1.3 percent.

In terms of the frequency of use of social media with mobile devices, responses show that 190 respondents representing more than three-quarter of the sampled population identified that they regularly access social media sites with their mobile devices. Only 2.1% of the respondents indicated that they scarcely use mobile devices for social media purposes, while 7.6% of the respondents cannot specify their frequency of use of social media with their mobile devices. This is an indication that using mobile devices for social media purposes is almost taking up the communication landscape, especially among youths in Southern Nigeria.

RQ3 Which Social Media Accessed On Mobile Technologies Serve As Most Useful for Political Public Forums Among Southern Nigerian Youth?

Table 4: Most useful social media on mobile devices for political information

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Facebook	152	63.6%
2go	6	2.5%
Twitter	8	3.3%
Blogging	10	4.2%
BBM	7	2.9%
Whatsapp	43	18.1%

Instagram	13	5.4%%
Total	249	100%

As shown in table 4, data regarding the most useful social media respondents' access to mobile devices for political messages indicate that Facebook ranked highest with a percentage of 63.6%. This is followed by Whatsapp with a percentage of 18.1%. For other social media, results, as shown on the table, indicates that 2.5% o the respondents use 2go; 3.3% use Twitter; 4.2% use blogs; 2.9% use BBM; while 5.4% use Instagram. It could be deduced that young people in Anambra, Enugu and Ogun states are familiar with and use mobile Facebook and Whatsapp for getting political messages more than other social media sites or device. This is probably largely due to the perceived usefulness of these social media and ease of use of mobile devices. This clearly implies that Facebook and Whatsapp was, therefore, the most useful social media for political communication among southern Nigerian youths during the 2015 elections.

Table 5: Respondents extent of use of mobile devices for political activities in 2015

Variables	Respondents who received political information through mobile devices		Respondents who use their mobile devices during the last election		Respondents who participated in the last election with their mobile devices	
Yes	118	49.2%	111	49.3%	82	33.3%
No	122	50.8%	114	50.7 %	164	66.7 %
Total	240	100%	225	100%	246	100%

Table 5 shows that more than half of the respondents (50.8%) did not receive political campaign information through their mobile devices; while a little less than half of the respondents (49.2%) indicated that they did receive such information. This demonstrates that most of the respondents did not receive political campaign information through their mobile devices. Also, more than half of the respondents (50.7%) did not use their mobile devices during the last election, while less than half of the respondents (49.3%) did. Again, 164 respondents representing 66.7% indicated that they did not participate in the last election with their mobile devices; while 82 respondents representing 33.3% did. The implication of these findings is that even though respondents had earlier indicated an interest in making use of mobile devices and social media, in terms of its usage for election matters, there was a clear indication those mobile devices were not effective and actively put to use in the 2015 presidential election. Apparently, this might be a result of the identified challenges revealed on further probes on research question four.

RQ4 How instrumental were social media accessed on mobile devices towards youth’s response to political messages and activities in the Nigerian 2015 presidential election?

Table 6: Usefulness of social media in the success of 2015 Nigerian presidential election

Variables	Respondents influenced through social media to vote the last election		Usefulness of social media to the success of the Nigerian election	
Yes	89	37.9%	136	58.6%
No	99	42.1%	35	15.1%
Not sure	47	20.0%	61	26.3%
Total	235	100%	232	100%

From table 6, research question four sought to find out the instrumentality of social media to the success of the last election in the three selected states. Responses indicated that 99 respondents representing 42.1% assert that they were not influenced through their social media to vote during the 2015 presidential election; 89 respondents representing 37.9% indicated that they were influenced to vote through their social media, while 47 respondents representing 20% were not sure that social media played any significant role in influencing them to vote in the 2015 election. This demonstrates that social media to some extent (89%) played some role in persuading people to participate in the 2015 election.

Further investigation to find out the usefulness of social media to the success of the 2015 Nigerian election indicated that, 136 respondents representing 58.6% noted that social media were useful to the success of the last general election in Nigeria; 61

respondents representing 26.3% indicated they are not sure that social media was useful to the success of the election; while 35 respondents representing 15.1% indicated that it was not useful to the success of the general election. This, of course, corroborates extant literature that social media has impacted on political communication and civic engagements.

Table 7: Ways social media were useful to the success of the 2015 presidential election

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
It motivates people to be part of the electoral process	61	25.7%
It helps people to be abreast of information about the election	85	35.9%
It helps people to participate in the public sphere	10	4.2%
All of the above	81	34.2%
Total	237	100%

In terms of the usefulness of social media during the last election, in table 7 a total of 85 respondents representing 35.9% indicated that social media helped them to keep abreast of information about the election, 61 respondents representing 25.7% signify that it motivates people to be part of the electoral process, while 4.2% of the respondents indicated that it helps them to participate in the public sphere. On the whole, 81 respondents representing 34.2% are of the opinion that social media assisted in the performance of these various functions during the 2015 presidential election in their states.

In as much as respondents indicated they used their mobile devices during the last election that were, however, without some challenges. As indicated in a further question, a reasonable proportion of the respondents 148, representing 59.4% indicated time to waste as a major challenge. Fifty-four respondents representing 21.7% identified poor services from mobile service providers as a challenge; another 17.2% of the respondents indicated that it makes them lose focus on other things whenever they are using their mobile devices. Generally, the findings corroborate previous study (Morah, 2018) and tables 4, 5, and 6 to demonstrate that new media technology is adopted based on factors like accessibility, usefulness, and ease of use. This further strengthens the tenets of the technology acceptance model and is, therefore, a contribution to knowledge.

Discussion, Conclusion, and Recommendations

The 2004 American Presidential election campaign initiated a new trend in political advancement for the Internet. About 63 million Americans utilized the Internet for political information while 43 million were believed to have, apparently, discussed politics via e-mail or other online platforms during the 2004 election (Williams & Tedesco 2006). Barack Obama in the 2008 election campaign was also, believed to have pioneered the use of social media for political mass mobilization, thereby, attracting young voters during the primary campaigns. President Trump has notably been using social media as a very important tool in governance as well as other world leaders and Nigeria is not an exception. This was thoughtfully demonstrated during the 2011 election in Nigeria when most of the electorate were politically mobilizes through mobile phone and social media to come out and vote.

This study, which examined the utilization of mobile in the Nigeria 2015 presidential election, has, therefore, shown that most Southern Nigerian youths (66.7%) did not vote as a result of the political messages they received from social media through their mobile devices as anticipated by political parties and the public. Although most of them (81.7%) utilize their mobile device for social media activities most especially on Whatsapp and Facebook for social interactions and networking, its use for political intention was found to be minimal. The result of the analysis has equally, shown that mobile devices occasioned by the emergence of ICT have gradually taken over the Nigerian communication landscape. This becomes obvious as virtually all the respondents showed evidence of ownership of one mobile device or the other.

This finding is a justification of the Technological Acceptance Model adopted as a theoretical foundation in this study which suggests that when users are presented with a new technology, their decision about how and when they will use the technology is dependent on their perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness of the device (Morah, 2018). Also, we could deduce from the findings that the predominant new media technology used by most respondents for a considerable length of time is chiefly the

mobile phone (feature and smartphones). This supports the views of (Wei, 2013; Ekwenchi, Morah & Adum, 2015) that the mobile device is a personal, interactive, internet-enabled and user-controlled portable platform that provides for the exchange and sharing of personal and non-personal information among interconnected users.

The findings as well showed that social media were used mainly for making calls, browsing and engaging in social networks. Facebook and WhatsApp were also, found to be the most popularly used social network by Southern Nigerian youths for getting political messages. However, despite the popularity of mobile devices among the youths, findings further indicate that such popularity did not translate into its use in proactive political activities as a little above half of the respondents did not receive political information through mobile devices; nor used their mobile devices during the 2015 presidential election; nor participated in the last election with their mobile devices. Implicitly, Nigerian youths use mobile devices for other activities apart from political activities, even though they assert that social media was useful in the Nigeria election. Therefore, one wonders what could be the reason for the apathy in the Nigerian 2015 presidential election.

There were, nevertheless, lots of challenges in technology usage as a reasonable proportion of the respondents, 59.4% indicated time to waste as a major obstacle; 21.7% identified poor services from mobile service providers as a challenge; while another 17.2% of the respondents point out that it makes them lose focus on personal desires when they use mobile devices. However, some of the respondents (1.6%) could not understand the meaning or the reason for the mobile texts from some political parties. From the data obtained and analyzed for the study, the following conclusions can thus be drawn: that although youths are getting adapted to mobile devices are a means of communication through social media such as Facebook and WhatsApp which are more prevalent among youths; they did not employ their mobile devices as expected during the Nigerian 2015 presidential election to any reasonable extent..

Therefore, it is recommended that the polity is educated on the usefulness of mobile social media in governance prior to the 2019 elections so that they can utilize it as an effective political communication tool. The Nigerian Communication Commission should also help maintain high standards among mobile network providers in Nigeria to triumph over the persistent cases of high data tariff and poor network receptions in the telecom industry. The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) should as well, set up a social media tracking Centre that will help supervise, collect, and interpret trends and reports during Nigerian elections. This will further intensify efforts at e-Governance and e-Democracy as practiced in other parts of the world. They should try and establish a guiding principle for the use of social media as a political communication tool in Nigeria in view of the forthcoming 2019 elections. Most importantly, INEC, civil society organizations, and relevant security agencies should try and establish strategies to systematically verify information reported by citizen observers on mobile social media during the forthcoming 2019 elections. More studies should equally be conducted on the use of mobile social media in subsequent elections in other parts of the country.

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