

The 2015 General Elections In Nigeria:

Emerging Issues



Edited  by
John Tor Tsuwa, PhD
Elijah Terdoo Ikpanor

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Donafrique Publishers

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Published by

Donafrigue Publishers,
Suite C1-2 Awmar Plaza,
Plot 1084, Joseph Gomwalk Way, Guru District,
Abuja

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First Published by
Donafrigue Publishers, 2017

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ISBN: 978-978-954-202-4

Printed by *nerves*

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FOREWORD

The thrust of elections is to produce leaders in a political process but as the 2015 General Elections in Nigeria proved, there are other equally important issues that are related to the electoral process that cannot be ignored and which underscore the importance of this book. In broad terms, the significance of this collection lies in the fact that it focuses on the 2015 elections which marked a crucial phase in the history of democracy in Nigeria. Apart from being marked out as the most keenly contested elections which many saw as the most critical stage in Nigeria's democratic experience, the 2015 elections, for the first time, led to the transfer of power from an incumbent President to the opposition in a manner the defied the chaos that many had predicted.

It is common knowledge that elections can serve as the most credible method of transferring power from one entity to another and perhaps to many, the 2015 General Elections was the most credible elections so far in Nigeria's recent history. However, it also opened up several issues that deserve attention especially in sustaining and enhancing the democratic process in Nigeria. Thus, the specific importance of this work rests on its multi-faceted analysis of the 2015 Elections. The work is a scholarly perspective which dwells on the 2015 Elections. It is a composition of well-knitted articles whose scope is quite far-reaching and cuts across the media perspectives on the elections, the dimensions of violence that came along with the elections and the challenges that were experienced as well as the technological innovations which proved to be game-changing developments during the elections.

The papers are written by meticulous, versatile and seasoned researches whose experience is quite explicit in their analytical and lucid pattern of presentation. The book stands to be of immense benefit to those who are interested in understanding the dynamics of the Nigerian electoral system and particularly the 2015 elections. The wide range of issues relating to the 2015 elections which are contained in this work such as the challenges

encountered during the elections provide an enhanced and more informed platform for stakeholders in the electoral process which should make them more effective and efficient in planning for future elections.

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Social Media and the 2015 Presidential Electioneering Campaign: The Case of Nairaland Forum

Moses Metumara Duruji

Introduction

The increasing use of social media in election matters appears to be significantly altering the traditional practice of electioneering. This phenomenon which is fast gaining momentum is founded on the rapidly expanding access to Internet, increased availability of Internet-ready Smart phones and other communication devices that are fast penetrating down to the base of most societies (Ayo et al, 2015). This access make it possible for individuals to instantaneously share information with their friends, who in turn spreads same information to people within their network, thus spreading information faster than the traditional media channels would otherwise have done (Ayo et al 2015). The wider diffusion of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) devices has created the environment for the electorates to take advantage of the various web-based media platforms like personal websites, social networking sites, blogs, and newsletters for political communication (Ayo et al 2015). In Nigeria just like most other parts of the world, Social media is playing vital role in the mobilization of people to participate actively in political events in most part of the World including Nigeria. This statement is confirmed true in Nigeria as indicated in the turnout of events such as the occupy Nigeria movement in January 2012 when Nigerians were mobilized through social media into the streets to challenge the government on increase in the prices of petroleum products. Beside that we have also witnessed the impact of social media in the electioneering process in Nigeria, particularly the gubernatorial elections of 2014 in Anambra, Ekiti and Osun states where the widespread use of social media

reporting real time events has contributed in the process turning out credible (Ayo et al 2015). The allusion that arises from here indicates that the people are switching from the traditional news channels to social media platforms to express themselves real-time as the news break, thus making it difficult for those bent on it to manipulate the electoral process or spin events to favour particular parties or candidates (Ayo et al 2015). This paper examined the impact social media in political communication and the effects of such political information diffusion among the electorates in shaping perception and construction of an image that culminates in voter behavior during and after the polls. The paper also investigates the extent of electorates' interactions in the course of the elections using social media platforms particularly Nairaland to which many Nigerians have subscribed and its impact in the outcome of the 2015 presidential election. In which ways did discussion and exchanges in Nairaland go all through the campaign season and how did it shape the expectations and outcome of the 2015 presidential elections.

The chapter adopted qualitative approach in the gathering and analysis of data. This was basically centered on the use of secondary materials sourced from books, journals, periodicals and largely internet materials. Data gathered through these sources were analysed using descriptive analysis, tables, statistical figures and pictures. This was designed to answer the following questions;

What are the trend in the discussion and exchanges in Nairaland Forum during the 2015 electioneering campaign and in what ways did such prepare the minds of partisans to the outcome of the election?

What were the degree of enthusiasm in the camp of the two leading campaign play out in the postings and upload at Nairaland Forum and in what ways were these exchanges affect expectations in the two leading camp at the election?

In what ways did thread that centred on prediction of outcome of the election received and did it portray any idea of the likely outcome of the election?

In what ways did thread of live events on Election Day and early result indicate the direction the election may go?

In what ways were the Nairalanders on both sides of the major camp in the presidential contest inspire their confidence in their candidate beating expectation and coasting to victory?

Did the posting on Nairaland give any of the major camps in the election of the likely outcome the announcement of the final result of the presidential election?

Review of Related Literature

According to Curtis (2013), social media is an internet site where people interact freely, sharing and discussing information about each other and their personal lives, using a multimedia mix of personal words, pictures, audio and videos. For Kaplan and Heinlein (2000), the social media as a group of internet-based applications, builds on the ideological and technological foundations of web 2.0 which allows for the creation and exchange of user-generated contents. He further argues that social media depends on mobile and web-based technologies to create highly interactive platforms through which individuals and groups share, co-create, discuss and modify generated content. Through these platforms, the emergence of social media has been able to fill a vacuum in mass communication in the sense that it provides the opportunity for an individual to be engaged by others and also the chance for such an individual to engage others. Lilleker and Jackson (2011) posits that there is power in social media that can be useful for political purposes which can be situated in the volume of traffic such social media site commands.

Daniel (2015) sees social media just like any other media as an instrument of communication, just like the traditional media channels such as newspaper, radio and television. But Kuhus posited that the social has brought about a sea change in the communication experience from the need to share it, to the need to share in it. This to him shows that internet technology and social media in particular have brought enormous power to the people in forms that were never there before that can easily undermine established authorities.

The advancement of internet technology into web 2.0 has been one of the catalysts that have transformed online communication in an interactive. This of course has contributed immensely to the dynamism of social networking. With the new technology, users of the internet can create and publish their own content. It made it possible for individuals and groups to create blogs, forums and social groups with which they share information, texts, pictures, videos among other exchanges. The impact of social media as these forms of communication is known, have shattered the mysteries of journalism and old theories of mass communication in terms of limitation and control that pays no respect to national boundaries (Solis and Kenridge 2009).

However, social media is not a monotonous platform of communication, there are different forms of interaction that comes under the categorization of social media, including social networking which comprises such medium as Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr, Pinterest. Whatsap and Instagram, content communities include Youtube and Flickr, while collaborative projects include LinkedIn. Blogs and vlogs include LindaIkeji, while Nairaland and Naijaloaded falls under forum (Joseph, 2012)

Social media afford s its users the most useful means of social networking. Given this scenario, one could therefore construe social media as a platform where people of diverse background and interests generate and search for information, express their view, communicate ideas, pass information on multidimensional issues and thereby generate discussion through the use of Internet and digital facilities or technologies.

According to Andreas and Micheal (2010), social media also known as Internet-based tools and services, allow users to interact with one another, generate content, distribute and search for information. Social media provides a platform for a mix of citizen participation and projection of pecuniary interest that is relatively free, unlike the traditional media that is largely paid for (Mojeed-Sanni, 2015). This view makes clear the position of Kweon and Kim (2011) that social media have become a most important source of personal orientation, ensuring animosity during inter activities among members of society on variety of

issues even on politics and political discourse. Social media as a platform makes it possible for these activities to be undertaken because it possesses characteristics which are useful tool for political participation including its intrinsic value to engender conversation, openness and, participatory connectedness (Mayfield, 2008). In the light of this, we can argue that the emergence of social media has been of tremendous help to creating awareness and ensuring the involvement of great number of people across the globe in the events that are happening around them (Adibe and Odoemelam, 2010). This concurs with the views of scholars that the emergence of social media has contributed in shrinking the world as people are increasingly connected to one another beyond national boundaries thereby forming new beneficial relationships (Baran, 1998).

Nigeria has embraced and maintained democratic governance in the last decade especially with the dwindling fortune of other non-democratic systems in some other parts of Africa. Military rule is almost becoming alien and considered an aberration wherever it still exist (Duruji, 2010). In recent times especially with the advances in Information technology, there has been an increased in the use of ICT in healthcare (Ikhuomoregbe, 2008), media, business, education and governance (Azeta et al., 2009). Studies exist that report the use of social media in politics. These studies show for example that President Barak Obama used the social media a lot in his campaign during the 2008 and 2012 elections. The use of social media is therefore, fast becoming popular in politics. It does not only empower people but also could democratize human relations. Oyeboode (2014), revealed that though the media have enhanced political awareness and interaction, there are cases where it has been used to intimidate opponents and trigger conflicts. Studies on the influence of social media on electoral campaigns and voters behavior have shown that the number of online followers or likes a candidate has does not necessarily translate to an electoral success. Studies of the impact of social media for general election in Sweden 2010 and the United States affirm this fact (Gomez, 2014)

Web based Platform and Social Media

A web based platform can be defined as "a group of internet based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0 that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content" (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). It is also referred to as "social media" and includes web-based and mobile based technologies that are used to turn communication into interactive dialogue among individuals, organizations, and communities. Typical examples of social media platforms include websites such as Facebook, Twitter, Flickr, Youtube and the interactive options on these websites, such as the "re-tweeting" option on Twitter. These instruments are referred to as media because they are tools which can also be used for the storage and dissemination of information, however unlike the traditional media like Television and Radio, most of the social media tools allow their users to interact as "re-tweeting" on Twitter and "comment" options on Facebook illustrate.

Sweetser and Lariscy (2008), also defined web based platform as a "read-write web, where the users do not only view web contents but also have the privilege of contributing to it. The common denominator from most definitions of social media is fact that it is based on user-generated participation. With social media, users have the benefit of user-to-user interaction, a clear difference from what obtains in the traditional media where users only receive what they are fed with (Clark and Aufderheide, 2009). Another advantage of social media over traditional media is that users can make their choice of the information they want to access and share. This makes it possible for individuals with similar interests to form a network.

Factors for Rise of Social Media

Two primary tools that have enabled people to socialize and connect with each other online are social networking sites and electronic messaging. More than half of America's teens and young adults send electronic messages and use social networking sites, and more than one-third of all internet users engage in these activities (Jones and Fox, 2009). In Nigeria, over 3 million

people have Facebook accounts, while about 60,000 people are on Twitter (Asuni and Farris, 2011: 4). Most people who use social media tools access them mainly through computers and mobile devices such as phones and Tablet PCs. Analysts suggest that majority of phone purchases in the coming years will be more for using online networks rather than making phone calls (Baekdal, 2008). Thus, phone communication is now tending toward one-to-many sharing rather than the usual one-to-one conversation.

Forms of Social Media

There are different forms of social media technologies which include magazines, internet forums, weblogs, social blogs, podcasts, pictures, and video. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) had classified social media into six distinct categories such as collaborative projects like wikipedia, blogs and microblogs like twitter, content communities like youtube, social networking sites like facebook, virtual game worlds like world of warcraft, and virtual social worlds like second life.

Out of these six categories of social media tools, three categories (blogs and microblogs, content communities, and social networking sites) are the ones that are most relevant to the application of social media in the electoral process. it should be however noted that in the process of political communication, there is always a strong intermediation between the traditional media and the three categories of social media that are relevant in the electoral proess.

Social Media and Political Communication

Social media has transformed political communication in the following four major ways. We discuss each of these in the section below.

Segmentation of Audience

Social media has deepened the segmentation of audience generated by the rise of network of television channels, specialized magazines, and websites. This segmentation of audience is derived from two main elements of the social media:

diversification of coverage and selective exposure, which is, finding information that aligns with the predispositions of individuals (Stroud, 2008). Social media platform makes it possible for its users to read and discuss specific issues and then connect with other individuals who share their beliefs. This has the possibility of creating individual voters who agree on specific issues and who may not be able to relate with the wider issues that are part of a general election. With the social media, different segments can address the same issues from varying perspectives.

Weakening Gatekeeping Capacity of Traditional Media

Before the emergence of social media, the traditional media could determine to a large extent, what information should be dished out to the public, thereby acting as agenda setter for public discourse (Ayo et al, 2015). This confirms what McCombs and Shaw (1972) had asserted, that the mass media force attention to certain issues, build up public images of political figures and constantly presents objects suggesting what individuals in the public should think about, know about, and have feelings about. To them, only a small number of mass media news producers dominate the market, and therefore, audiences' only get information about what the media decides is important enough to be covered. By providing political actors with a platform to speak directly to their constituents and potential voters without the traditional media intermediary, the social media has largely curtailed the agenda setting role of the traditional media (Gillin, 2008).

The Power of Breaking News

Through social media platforms, breaking news that would have otherwise taken time of processing in the traditional media is becoming the order of the day in recent times (Ayo et al, 2015). In all, the use of social media limits the control of traditional press secretaries over the outflow of information, and also decreases the dependence on traditional media for up-to-date content. Although the lack of control over the content of social media may be positive in the sense that it allows for greater

freedom of information, there are also negative aspects of dishing out uncensored information to the public. The social media has been misused in many ways including using social media platforms to spread false information, abuse political opponents, and incite violence. There is therefore the need to balance this individual freedom and responsibility in the use of social media. Social media outlets have a responsibility to develop and implement social networking guidelines for their users.

Economic Implication of Social Media on Traditional Media

The wide use of social media as an easy platform of communication and access to information is having an influence on the socio-economic and political settings. Studies indicate that the increasing use of social media for political communication has led to decline in news print readership as well as television viewership in many countries (Australian Media and Communication Authority, 2007, Ayo et al, 2015). Given the emerging scenario, the social media is projected to increase its dominance as a means of political communication, and serve as a tool for gathering and disseminating political messages (Ayo et al, 2015). In order to counter the effect of social media, traditional media channels have devised a means of expanding their reach by using social media platforms for news broadcast (Ayo et al, 2015). Almost all the major broadcast and print media in Nigeria have Facebook and Twitter accounts. A common trend among traditional media houses, especially the broadcast sector provides avenues for i-reportage. I-reporters are individuals without professional experience of journalism, but who can utilize their deftness in the use of social media tools to broadcast events taking place around them through the traditional media. I-reporters post these pictures and videos of events to the portal provided by the media channel which in turn share it with the public after it has been processed through the television or radio station. Through these, the traditional media rely on users of social media for news, information and leads, the same way that social media utilize news and information emanating from newspapers, radio and television channels (Ayo et al, 2015).

Internet Penetration in Nigeria

The increased penetration of Computer, telephone, Internet and Mobile Technology has made politicians as well as the electorate embrace social media platform such as twitter, Facebook, YouTube sites to solicit votes and communicating political issues. Nigeria currently records the highest number of Internet users in Africa. The country is reported to have 70,300,000 Internet users out of the 297,885,898 Internet users in Africa as of June 2014 while Facebook which is the leading social media site has 6,630,200 active users in Nigeria as at June 2012 (Alexia, com 2014). The number of active lines in the country as at September 2014 is 134,507,329 (ncc.gov.ng). The increase in mobile internet traffic is expected to double between 2014 and 2015 and should see a 20-folds increase by the end the decade across the Africa region (Internet World stat 2014). Figure 1 shows Africa top 10 Internet countries.

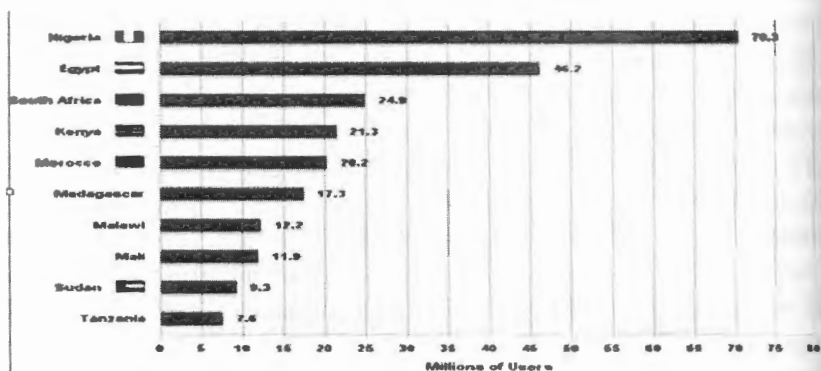


Figure 1: Top Ten Internet Users in Africa

Source (www.internetworldstat.com)

Nigeria is one of the developing countries with a very high internet usage by the populace. The ranking of internet usage in July 2014, placed Nigeria in the top ten of countries of the world in term of internet usage, in fact the country was ranked 8th among the list of countries (Internet Live Stats. Com, 2014). As at March 2015, the number of recorded internet users in Nigeria stands at 74,594,149, which is a large number indeed considering

the estimated population of the country that currently put the figure at 180 million (Internet Live Stats. Com, 2014). The wide usage of social media platforms by Nigerians has been noticed by the government and those in authorities. Even as far back as 2011, President Goodluck Jonathan opened a Facebook account and had many young people engaging with his message of transformation and a breath of fresh air message that largely propelled him to victory in the 2011 presidential election. Observing the impact of that, he created a ministry of Communication technology and also appointed a special assistant on social media.

The high rate of internet usage in Nigeria is facilitated by the wide penetration of telephony technology particularly the general system for mobile (GSM) which came into the Nigerian market in early 2000. Almost sixteen years after, the country has witnessed tremendous growth in that sector as confirmed by a publication from the National Communications Commission. The NCC in that publication reported that the number of Nigerians accessing Internet through GSM across the country on all the available network operators in Nigeria increased by 18, 418, 476 within the period of February, 2014 to January, 2015 and in percentage terms amounted to 29.02 percent. (NCC 2015). Explanation for this high rate of access to the internet by Nigerian is found in the fact that internet connectivity by the service providers is accessed by the increasing use of smart phones and modems provided by the networks that help subscribers make use of the sim cards to connect to internet with their laptops and tablets among others. His figure is further broken down by that publication according to the distribution among the major network providers in the country as indicated in the table below.

Table 1: Active Mobile phones in Nigeria

Service Provider	No as at February 2014	No as at January 2015
MTN	32,809,364	39, 173, 123
Global Com	14, 908, 109	17, 671, 405
Airtel	9,647,217	14,969, 924
Etisalat	6,109,681	10,078, 388
Total	63,474,371	81, 892,840

Source: NCC, (2015)

Use of Social Media in the Electioneering Process of the Fourth Republic

The recognition of the importance of social media by politicians the world over as a major means of reaching the electorate via on-line campaigning, is also true in Nigeria where it has also been adopted to compliment the traditional channels. For instance, during the 2011 general elections, many politicians, particularly the presidential aspirants, used social media tools to connect with voters and constituents. Facebook and Twitter appear to be the most widely used social media platforms by the politicians. For example, in December 2010, it was estimated that Goodluck Jonathan had nearly 300,000 fans on his Facebook page (Ekine 2010). Other presidential aspirants such as Dele Momodu, Ibrahim Shekarau, Nuhu Ribadu, Atiku Abubakar, and Ibrahim Babangida, all had Twitter and other social media accounts that attracted alot of subscribers. Political parties such as the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN), and Congress for Progressive Change (CPC) were also not left out. Social media offered politicians and their parties the opportunity to broadcast messages and recruit a huge number of volunteers to support their campaign. This phenomenon was intensified in the run up to the 2015 General elections as most of the major parties (PDP and APC) and candidates including Mohamadu Buhari who did not find it useful four years ago when he ran for the office of the president, opened his own twitter and facebook page. This showed how important these platforms are in the electioneering process.

Use of Social Media in Election Monitoring

One area where the effect of social media is being felt in Nigeria is the area of election monitoring. Civil Society organizations in the country have employed the use of social media as a tool for efficient election monitoring and reporting. This tool of course has impacted on the improvement of election monitoring and positively reflecting on the outcome of such elections as was experienced in the 2011 General election (Ayo et al, 2015). This is different from the experience in the 2003 and 2007 general elections which were largely marked by rigging and other electoral misconducts that were expressed by candidates and reports of election monitors and observers. With the use of social media, such malpractices included complains of disenfranchisement of prospective voters, snatching of ballot boxes from election officials and stuffing of the boxes with invalid ballot papers, as well as allegations of collusion between election officials and politicians to alter election results and twist popular mandate (Ibrahim and Ibeanu, 2009). The flaws that characterized the conduct of the 2007 elections severely dented the integrity of elections in Nigeria and triggered demands for freer, fairer, and more transparent elections.

Nairaland Forum Social Media Platform

Nairaland is a social forum founded in 2005 by Mr Oluwaseun Osewa. The Forum has a registered membership account of 1, 278211,340. Nairaland Forum is a very popular site in Nigeria that is why it has been rated the seventh most visited site by Nigerians and the most visited indigenous site (Alexa.com, 2015). The site sends out about 39,700 tweets and has a followership on tweeter of 134,000. It records over 300,000 average daily visitors.

?airaland Forum

Welcome, Guest. Join [Nairaland](#) Login [Trending](#) [Recent](#) [New](#)

Stats: 1,420,772 members, 2,295,752 topics. Date: Friday, 28 August 2015 at 06:26 PM

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» [Jobs That You Would Absolutely Not Take Even Though Unemployed](#) «

» [Soldiers Step Up Their Games: See Pics Of Some Ammunitions Used In Boko Haram Fight](#) «

» [Staunch Buhari's Supporters, Olatun & Farouk Criticise Buhari Over Appointments](#) «

» [Have You Seen This Beautiful Photo Of Singer Chidinma In Red Traditional Attire?](#) «

Figure 2: A typical Nairaland Frontpage
(Sources: Nairaland, 2015)

Nairaland Forum
 Welcome, Guest: [Join Nairaland](#) / [Login](#) / [Tridding](#) / [Recent](#) / [New](#)
 State: 1,121,550 members, 2,292,062 topics Date: Sunday, 10 August 2013 at 12:54 PM
[Search](#)

Politics - Nairaland

[Nairaland Forum](#) / [Nairaland](#) / [General](#) / [Politics](#)

Foreign Affairs: International Politics & other issues (11066 topics)

Ethnic, Racial Or Sectarian Politics: Racist, ethnicity oriented and sectarianist secessionist threads will end up here! (5933 topics)

Politics: Our country Nigeria is the giant of Africa! Ad Rate: 7.41,550.61 words (27.0% discount)

(0) (1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) (8) (9) (of 4163 pages) ([Circle New Topics](#))

Topic: Posts / Views / Updated / New

Important: Nairaland's Rule 7 Has Been Updated *
 by [Alhakeem](#) 1 hour 5,312 views 9.54am On: Aug 13, 2013

Biafran Agitation: Lower Niger Congress Replies ACE (1) [new](#)
 by [Oluwalope](#) 40 posts 2,153 views 1.2.54pm (today)

Biafra: Britain's Shame by Auburnu Wazuh [new](#)
 by [AuburnuWazuh](#) 7 posts 2,121 views 11:50 pm (today)

38 Convicted Victims On Their Way To Be Tried By Southland King: Dae In Accident
 by [captainprogress](#) 14 posts 2,117 views 12:43pm (today)

Queen Letter To President Muhammadu Buhari On His Recent Appointments (1) (2) (3) [new](#)
 by [MILITARY](#) 10 posts 2,111 views 11:24am (today)

America Related: A Heart Breaking Movie About Biafra War: Video [new](#)
 by [torimichu](#) 11 posts 2,109 views 12:04pm (today)

Clinton's Supported Buhari (Pictures) [new](#)
 by [Oluwalope](#) 12 posts 2,100 views 11:49pm (today)

Figure 3. Nairaland Political page
 (Source Nairaland, 2015).

The Nairaland social media forum is a general interest site that covers diversity of issues including politics. The membership of Nairaland media forum cuts across the entire length and breadth of the Nigerian society and has become a source of first hand real-time information about Nigeria around the world. In Nairaland, members put up front page on any issue and others quickly responds on that topic. The response to a particular topic can run into many pages depending on the trend line of such front page topic. Naira land forum pages on politics are very active during election season as Nigerians both within and outside the constituencies where the election or political related event is happening get their information. Infact the site becomes more active during political season as people within

and outside, floods the site for fresh and update information on ongoing event.

The Political Campaigns

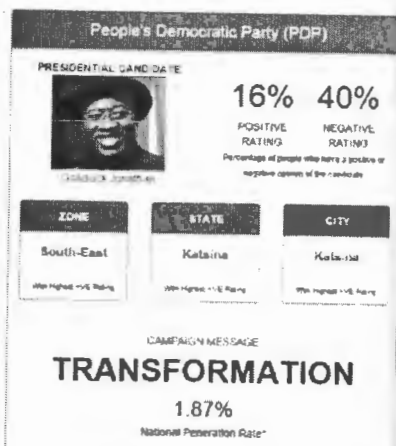
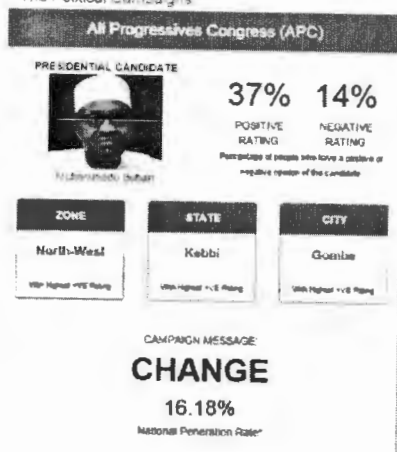


Figure 4: Upload on Nairaland during the campaign..
(Source Nairaland, 2015)



Figure 5: Partisan Posting on Nairaland during the Campaign



Figure 6 Partisan Posting on Nairaland
(Source Nairaland, 2015)

Nairaland Forum and 2015 Presidential Campaigns

The Nairaland Forum platform standout clearly as one of the popular platform for interaction and opinion molding online for Nigerians within the country and in the Diaspora and given the diversity of its membership and viewership, political party operatives who have realized the power of social media in the spread of news and its diffusion to the population, employed and saturated the forum with partisan threads throughout the period of the electioneering campaign. The trend in the posting and the accompanying exchanges in the various threads that made frontpage give idea of the candidate that is ahead in the campaign.

Core party supporters knowing the power of this platform effectively utilized it to gain psychological mileage over the other parties in the race. Live pictures of the rallies were constantly posted and updated by these core party supporters as a way of boosting confidence of their supporter and demoralize their opponents that the game is over as indicated in the comments and exchanges that follow these postings.

Besides the posting of live picture, caricatured photographs of the various parties and candidates were also posted to depict what is happening in the campaign and what is going to happen

at the polls. Below are samples of live campaign pictures that were uploaded on the site during the electioneering campaign:



Figure 7 APC (left) and PDP (right) Presidential Rallies in the North uploaded live on Nairaland
(Source Nairaland, 2015)



Figure 8: Pictures of Buhari's Campaign Uploaded live on Nairaland
(Source Nairaland, 2015).



Source Nairaland, 2015).

well as to cover and report the outcome of their monitoring of the electoral process.



(Nairaland, 2015).

Impact of Nairaland on the Outcome of the 2015 Presidential Election

The popularity of Nairaland Forum as a major source of Nigerian news and trends in opinion on major issues, including politics, made the platform very popular in the run up to the 2015 General elections. Shortly after the All Progressive Congress (APC) was formed by a merger of the legacy parties Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN), Congress Party of Nigeria (CPC) and the All Nigerian Peoples Party (ANPP) in 2014, interest was ignited in the Nairaland forum and threads as to what would be the outcome of the 2015 General elections. Before the emergence of the presidential candidates of the major parties, particularly the then ruling People Democratic Party (PDP) and the opposition APC, the threads centred on the likely candidates of the parties. Though it was generally given that the sitting president would clinch the ticket of the PDP even before he declared interest to re-contest the election, those of the APC was not settled and most thread centred on the outcome in different zones and states depending on who emerges on that ticket to challenge him. At this time, the incumbent president Goodluck Jonathan was looking unstoppable given the activities of the Transformation Ambassadors of Nigerian (TAN) a political pressure group which went round the country in blitz to mobilize support asking the incumbent president to stand re-election. However the crisis that engulfed the PDP leading to breakaway of the new Peoples Democratic Party (nPDP) and its subsequent merger with the APC, raised the confidence of the camp of the opposition that the 2015 election was winnable which indeed reflected in the kind of posts that were posted from thence.

The tempo in terms of the number of threads that appeared in the politics section and subsequently dominated the frontpage of the Nairaland Forum started after the candidate for the two major parties emerged from the primaries of their various parties. These reached crescendo when the candidates started going round the country for their campaign stop. At this point, posting on the presidential election went viral.

The intensity of use that social media in general witnessed during the run up to the 2015 General Election particularly the presidential election which attracted the greatest interest clearly showed how important that platform is as all the major actors engaged it to outwit one another.

The proof of this assertion finds support in the posts on Nairaland and the accompanying discussion on each of the threads which sometimes extends into several pages. The texture of the exchanges by the various camps in the presidential election depicts their understanding on the importance of such responses not only to boost confidence and drive turnout on Election Day, which in turn enhances the chance of their candidate and party to clinch victory on Election Day dominated most of the thread. However the views recorded in most of the thread show that a good number of the people that visited Nairaland Forum during the electioneering campaign were non-members.

Observation, during the campaign, shows that the camp of the APC and candidate Buhari was more confident and enthused than their counterpart from the PDP and Jonathan who was the incumbent. This confidence arise from the live pictures uploaded on Naiarand as indicated in Figures 7,8 and 9. From those pictures, it was very clear that the rallies of Buhari across the country particularly in the north and southwest zones which make up the majority of the electorate, was far attended than those of Jonathan and the PDP. An indication that supporters of the PDP felt intimidated by such crowd is captured in a posting by the moniker 'Ceo4eva' who posted pictures of PDP rallies by contrasting them with those of Buhari and APC which she sees as fake pictures. This is shown below:

Re: PDP Presidential Campaign Rally In Akure, Ondo (Photos)
by ceo4eva: 1:07pm On Jan 28

DON'T EVER FORGET THIS:

For the records, these photos I've uploaded here are REAL photos from the campaign venue, and not photos taken from Reinhard Bonnke's crusades, like the way

APC does! 

We don't show fake crowd like the APC!

122 Likes 16 Shares (Nairaland, 2015).

The post above attracted one hundred and twenty-two likes which indicated that most of the supporters of Jonathan and the PDP subscribed to the views expressed by Ceo4eva. The tone of Ceo4eva show that in the run up to the presidential election of 2015 in Nigeria, the supporters of Jonathan /PDP were lagging behind in the mind game of who is likely to win the presidential polls. The supporters of Buhari/APC also recognized that the Akure rally which Ceo4eva reported was well attended, and therefore attempted to diffuse whatever confidence that rally may give Jonathan supporters that Ondo state is in their bag. So the kind of exchanges at the Forum was intended by the various contending camps to establish the upper hand that will inspire the confidence of their members to turn out on Election Day. This view is confirmed by the following exchanges in response to the pictures posted by Ceo4eva;

Re: PDP Presidential Campaign Rally In Akure, Ondo
(Photos) by jumainsexy(f): 11:28pm On Jan 28

ceo4eva:

God Bless Jonathan!

God Bless Ondo State!!

God Bless Nigeria!!!

Keep deceiving yourself. we are not voting GEJ in Ondo State. I was at the rally and i'm not gonna vote GEJ. 75% of those at the rally were there against their will. The useless Ebola Mimiko didn't allow workers to go to work and forced the top officials to mobilize civil servants to democracy park in order to deceive the clueless GEJ. He even promised GEJ dat he will deliver 1million votes for PDP in Ondo State, whereas, Ondo state only have 800,000 number of registerd voters. Only the clueless one can be so deceived. Quote me anywhere PDP CAN NOT WIN THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION IN ONDO STATE.

Re: PDP Presidential Campaign Rally In Akure, Ondo (Photos) by Nobody: 1:21pm On Jan 28

let not Jonathan think he has their support lest he fall. All these are just fake impressions created by the people to think he is supported. Who is in support of poverty, bokoharam, missing funds, kidnapping and lot

#GMB till 2019

39 Likes 1 Share

Re: PDP Presidential Campaign Rally In Akure, Ondo (Photos) by Oduduwaboy(m): 3:16pm On Jan 28

justynneke:

I live in akure too, my kids were denied education today because of GEJ

Why shuld schools b closed as well as other institutins just because of him.

Mimiko is enof to make Gej loose ondo state.

because he used labour party n move to pdp afta election

He did little in 1st term, pple voted him again n he did nt just fail to work bur also denied us our entitlements as well as collected d little we av thru high tax, parking tax etc

Ondo state pple r wiser nw, if mimiko who did little in his 1st term can b dis wicked during d second term; imagine wot gej who did almost notin d 1st would do in his second term

Ignore d crowd, interview sum of dem

laughing i live in Akure too & the above is the common feeling. Mimiko is an albatross on the neck of GEJ in this state ...dont let the pictures deceive you .

GEJ / PDP should concentrate on South-South & South East abeg !

4 Likes 2 Shares

Re: PDP Presidential Campaign Rally In Akure, Ondo (Photos) by wirelessmaster: 5:37pm On Jan 28

Seun and the Nairaland Team Well-done for your incisive,

subjective and PR activity on the campaign activities and issues related to political parties here. Yesterday, some people decided to have an analysis of front page political events reporting for three weeks from the US. I was alerted as well. I have just finished mine with information skewed about 80% or 90% in favour of a particular political party. This was the observation of the group as well.

If the party eventually loses this election, Nairaland is still save. Afterall, Nairaland website is not hosted under .ng top level domain numbering.

As an IT platform, Nairaland is expected to have put the issue of closing down of a platform both website and as VAS in GSM system by authority as a front page issue. Also, campaign of other political parties have not featured prominently in the last one month. It is ratio 8:2 or 9:1

This is not fair

AyokunleRuth:

let not Jonathan think he has their support lest he fall. All these are just fake impressions created by the people to think he is supported. Who is in support of poverty, bokoharam, missing funds, kidnapping and lot

#GMB till 2019

But if the same sets of crowd show up at GMB's campaign ground you will gladly scream GEJ in trouble...Talk of double standard...SMH

54 Likes 6 Shares (Nairaland, 2015).

From the exchange above reacting to Ceo4eva post, a Buhari/APC supporter with the moniker Jumainsexy discountenance the post and chest beating of the 'op', saying that Ondo is not voting for Jonathan/PDP. Another supporter with the moniker 'Oduduwaboy' though accepting the well attended rally tried to explain it away as an artificial gathering where the attendees were forced by the sitting governor of the state who wanted to impress the incumbent and ruling party that Ondo is strong. The main intension of the supporters of the major parties in posting comments as indicated above is to deflate whatever confidence

the opposing party supporters may have. For instance the response by a Jonathan/PDP supporter that if was GMB that pulled the kind of crowd in Akure, the whole thread will be awashed with comments screaming GEJ in trouble, aptly indicated the state of this at the Nairaland Forum that the supporters of Buhari/ APC had the upperhand in the mind game.

It can therefore be clearly stated that Buhari/ APC supporters on Nairaland Forum were more enthused in the run up to the elections compared with the supporters of Jonathan/PDP. The degree of enthusiasm among supporters in the two major political camps of course reflected in the postings that dominated the threads on the presidential election. Having made that point, it is equally safe to posit that these enthusiasms which manifested in the tone of the post also went far in shaping likely expectation on the polling day. A good example to this can be cited in the comment of a Buhari/Supporter with the moniker 'gen2briz' and 'Laurel03' both of whom were reacting to the commented as follows;

Re: Apc Presidential Campaign Rally In Kano.....#change....

by gen2briz(m): 8:39am On Jan 20

Abati tell GEJ to come and see crowd showing their love to our General..... Kano people sanu jare

GMB till TAN's get better jobs.

Long live GMB.

No wonder Mtn agreed to campaign for GMB. Our general pull crowd die

26 Likes

Re: Apc Presidential Campaign Rally In Kano.....#change....

by laurel03: 9:34am On Jan 20

Febuhari 14 on my mind... Change is too sure and I will beg my enemy to vote for person that will sweep corruptions to jail.. I like peoples General to lead me.. Sai Buhari.. See vote

26 Likes 2 Shares (Nairaland, 2015)

This showed that the enthusiasm gap was with those that were supporting Buhari /APC and as such exhibited more confidence through their posting, line of thought and comment. Therefore Buhari supporters within the Nairaland social media platform were very high that their candidate would win the election. As such in their post on Nairaland were predicting outcome that would be positive for their candidate. The following post by 'lacasa' and 'Youngwizzy' reacting to a thread that posted live pictures of Jonathan/PDP rally in Kaduna.

Re: PDP Presidential Campaign Rally In Kaduna (Photos)
by lacasa: 3:26pm On Jan 31

Pictures don't tell the story here

The PDP Kaduna campaign team got so desperate to the extent that they couldn't mobilize average Kaduna people to go to the rally point today.

There were free buses to transport people but no passengers willing.

They had to start promising 10k to people and begging them to wear the branded GEJ shirts and caps b4 entering, ironically, that even made matters worse cos even wt the 10k people ignored them and still said NO!.

I was so proud of my KD people today wallahi.

Even wt the 10k inducement, they were not moved and some were even threatening to beat up the agents if they didn't leave the area.

From Zaria to KD metropolis this was the case.

This people you see were mobilized from groups under the budgeted payroll of the PDP registered wt Ahmadu Ali's campaign organization.

#I am in KD today and an eye witness to this fact!.

GEJ/PDP r like enemies of the state in most parts of Kaduna. Even the Governor and Vice-president who are from the state are fearful themselves after the events that followed during Sarki Shehu's anniversary a month back.

Kaduna is an APC stronghold!

Quote me anywhere

Sai Buhari kawai!
140 Likes 10 Shares

Re: PDP Presidential Campaign Rally In Kaduna (Photos)

by Yungwizzzy(m): 3:28pm On Jan 31

This stadium is really empty

I expected a very massive mast climbing crowd as kaduna is the home state of the VP - Samboribobo

This must be a very big disappointment for Samboribobo and PDP and it confirms the assumed 90% votes for Buhari

Sai Buhari

CHANGE

49 Likes 3 Shares (Nairaland, 2015).

This line of thought characterized post by supporters of Buhari/APC in most of the thread dealing with state of the campaign by the two major political parties. The first comment attracted 140 likes which indicated that most of those that viewed the post are in agreement with the comment. In a different post where live pictures of Buhari/APC rally in Bauchi was displayed, the exchange between the moniker 'tuniski' a Buhari/APC supporter who created the thread and the moniker 'alaoeri' who supported Jonathan/PDP were thoughts that centre on prediction of how the election will go. A critical examination of the exchange would show that in this exchange as in many others, those in support of Buhari exuded more confidence of their candidate winning the election than those of PDP who even concede some parts of the country even before the votes are cast.

Re: APC Presidential Campaign In Bauchi Live by tuniski:

4:40pm On Jan 31

alaoeri:

This is Bauchi where PDP national chairman is from & also the sitting governor is PDP but i am 100% sure GMB is winning Bauchi state.

the last time I checked GEJ performed woefully in Bauchi in 2011 without getting upto 15% of total votes cast. So what is

new? Abeg GEJ till 2019 is in autopilot! The Buhari's north will vote for him like they always do but, he will be defeated the 4th and final time!

1 Like

Re: APC Presidential Campaign In Bauchi Live by alaoeri:
4:58pm On Jan 31

tuniski:

the last time I checked GEJ performed woefully in Bauchi in 2011 without getting upto 15% of total votes cast. So what is new?

Abeg GEJ till 2019 is in autopilot! The Buhari's north will vote for him like they always do but, he will be defeated the 4th and final time!

Keep deceiving yourself, this time around the game has CHANGE, the whole of SW are behind the GENERAL couple with little votes from SS/SE GMB is cruising to Aso rock.

6 Likes (Nairaland, 2015).

Social media platform was indeed very significant and Nairaland Forum has been very active platform of mobilization and the political actors recognized this by swamping the forum with thread that portrays their party and candidate in positive ways so as to boost confidence among them that would drive them to the polls on polling day. Even as early results started to emerge in the night and early morning of the next day after the votes were cast. The trend of the results put the camp of Buhari/APC as indicated in the tone of the post below, while Jonathan/PDP supporter, who managed to comment, insisted that those results were fake and shall be refuted by Jega, the Independent Electoral Commission's chairman.

Re: 2015 PRESIDENTIAL Election:buhari Wins Big In Lagos, Ogun, Osun by Taaheey(m): 4:15pm On Mar 29

I really wanna celebrate these results....but am just gonna hold dat champaigne till d final results sha.....GMB all da

ay!!!
1 Like

Re: 2015 PRESIDENTIAL Election:buhari Wins Big In Lagos, Ogun, Osun by TI1919(m): 4:15pm On Mar 29

Re: 2015 PRESIDENTIAL Election:buhari Wins Big In Lagos, Ogun, Osun by midolian(m): 4:15pm On Mar 29

I want to say a big thanks to all those that voted for GMB and a big thanks to GEJ too, for opening our eyes. Never again will we make the mistake of 2011.
SAI BUHARI!!!

2 Likes

Re: 2015 PRESIDENTIAL Election:buhari Wins Big In Lagos, Ogun, Osun by Iwonder(m): 4:16pm On Mar 29

Lies

Re: 2015 PRESIDENTIAL Election:buhari Wins Big In Lagos, Ogun, Osun by IykeChukz(m): 4:16pm On Mar 29

Waiting for Jega to refute this...

People can form Jega.

Re: 2015 PRESIDENTIAL Election:buhari Wins Big In Lagos, Ogun, Osun by Ayoakinkahunsi(m): 4:26pm On Mar 29

Mean why reason why ondo result is not out now i dont know

inec commissioner release ondo result now

Re: 2015 PRESIDENTIAL Election:buhari Wins Big In Lagos, Ogun, Osun by Ismahill(m): 5:00pm On Mar 29

eeeeeeeeeeeeey.....I don change my name 2 buhari

1 Like

Re: 2015 PRESIDENTIAL Election:buhari Wins Big In Lagos, Ogun, Osun by samutd4u(m): 5:03pm On Mar 29

Lolz

Re: 2015 PRESIDENTIAL Election:buhari Wins Big In Lagos
Ogun, Osun by gen2briz(m): 5:05pm On Mar 29
 In korede's voice "Sai Baba has you don win election
 #Godwin"

Re: 2015 PRESIDENTIAL Election:buhari Wins Big In Lagos
Ogun, Osun by Themaingate: 5:13pm On Mar 29
NA GOD O
SAI BABA
THE GAME CHANGER

The early results posted on Nairaland which saw Buhari/APC leading in south west which is the battle ground areas, gave Nairalanders inkling of the likely outcome of the election. The elation and celebration of Buhari/APC supporters and depression by those who were supporting Jonathan /PDP indicated what shall finally be announced officially.

Conclusion

The emergence of social media platforms has changed the dynamics of electioneering including Nigeria. The 2015 presidential election was the most contested election in Nigeria. The PDP which won the election in 1999 after transition election organized by General Abdulsalam Abubakar has had it easy the election circles of 2003, 2007 and 2011. However, the determination of the disparate opposition to wrestle power from the PDP caused them to come together in a merger never witnessed before in the history of Nigeria.

However the influx and diffusion of ICT has transformed electioneering and political marketing. In addition, ICT has also made monitoring of election by the voters much easier, making it much more difficult for desperate politicians and compromised electoral officials to manipulate outcomes of election. Nairaland social forum where varying issues are discussed including politics which dominated frontpage for a long time during the 2015 electioneering campaign, provided opportunity for party trolls to ventilate their desire. The popularity of Nairaland and the intensity of the exchanges permeated down the population

that was why the diehard supporters of the various parties and candidates tried all they can to gain the upper hand within the Nairaland social media. From the finding, we came to the knowledge that /Buhari/APC supporters had confidence inspired into them through the written and pictorial post on Nairaland and that was significant in driving turnout that consequently gave him the victory at the polls on March 28, 2015.

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