**Credible Elections and the Role of Social Media: The Case of Nairaland in the 2014 Osun Gubernatorial Election**

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The use of social media in elections appears to be gathering momentum that is altering the traditional practice of electioneering. This phenomenon is premised on the rapidly expanding access to internet, increased availability of internet-ready smartphones and other communication devices, which enable individuals to simultaneously share information with any number of peers or even the public. The electorates across many countries around the world are now taking advantage of the various web-based media platforms like personal websites, social networking sites, blogs, and newsletters for political communication. In Nigeria, the situation is not different from the general trend around the world. For instance, the turnout of events in the recently conducted gubernatorial elections in some states points to the important role social media can play in ensuring credible elections. It appears the electorates including those in Nigeria have abandoned traditional news break, thus making it difficult for politicians and their unscrupulous collaborators in the electoral commission to manipulate the electoral process or spin events to favour particular parties or candidates which is the prevalent practice that have characterized the electoral process in Nigeria. This paper attempts to gain a better understanding of the impact of political information diffusion among the Nigerian electorates. The paper also attempts to investigate 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 2014 Osun state gubernatorial election. The paper adopts qualitative approach in the gathering and analysis of data and based on our findings, the paper proposes ways in which the social media can effectively support free, fair and transparent elections in Nigeria especially as the country approaches the 2015 general elections. The paper concludes that the use of various social media channels in not only transmitting real-time information but also in removing censorship by gatekeepers went a long way to prove to the Osun state electorate the transparency of the election result in the midst of the highly competitive tension soaked election.

Keyword: Social Media Political Communication, Nairaland, Social Networks, Elections

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