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Influence of Social Media Campaign on the 2023 Presidential Election among Undergraduates of Yaba College of Technology

¹Odunayo Elizabeth Olajuwona, ²Olanrewaju Amos Arisoyin & ³Eric Madaki

^{1,2,3} Department of Mass Communication, Trinity University, Yaba, Lagos State



ORCID:

¹ <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8854-0105>

² <https://orcid.org/0009-0003-9751-1236>

³ <https://orcid.org/0009-0005-2379-8902>

***Corresponding Author:** olanrewaju.arisoyin@trinityuniversity.edu.ng

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Abstract

Political communication and campaign strategies are shifting from traditional platforms to social media, highlighting the transformative role of social media in the political landscape. It is now a crucial tool for shaping discourse, engaging citizens, and influencing electoral processes, particularly in Nigeria. The influence of social media on political communication, mobilisation, and civic participation is increasingly significant in contemporary contexts. Consequently, it is essential to explore how social media platforms are utilised during election campaigns, with an emphasis on raising awareness and promoting engagement among young voters. This study investigates the influence of X (formerly known as Twitter) on the 2023 Presidential election campaign in Nigeria, with specific objectives to ascertain the extent of awareness regarding political campaigns on X, to evaluate the level of exposure to campaign content on the platform, and to assess the influence of the 2023 Presidential election campaign as presented on X among the surveyed participants. This study is based on the technological determinism theory. Utilising a survey method with a purposive sample of 119 participants, the findings indicate that while a majority were aware of the presidential campaign on X, a substantial minority were not. It also reveals that the X platform campaign significantly influenced the 2023 presidential election among respondents. The researchers recommend that campaigns diversify their social media strategies and create tailored content for different demographic groups to enhance engagement and participation.

Keywords: Political Campaigns, Social Media, X platform, 2023 Nigerian Presidential Election

Introduction

The expansion of the internet and advancements in digital technology have significantly increased access to interactive platforms, enabling extensive information sharing that has the potential to influence human



behaviour, decision-making, and perceptions, particularly through social media channels. Apuke and Tunca (2018) describe social media as a transformative dimension of mass communication, fundamentally altering the methods by which information is created, disseminated, and consumed. This evolution has profound implications for both individual and collective engagement with information and, ultimately, for societal dynamics as a whole.

Empirical research conducted by media scholars has demonstrated that the use of social media in political communication has become increasingly widespread on a global scale, particularly in the contexts surrounding elections—before, during, and after the electoral process. The efficacy of social mobilisation has been significantly enhanced through various social media platforms. These platforms play a crucial role in shaping political discourse and facilitating engagement among citizens (Olowokere & Audu-Bako, 2019). In the present digital era, political campaigns, especially presidential election campaigns which are increasingly depending on social media platforms to garner support, while online campaigning can have both positive and negative effects, social media, in particular, has the potential to significantly influence the landscape of politics (Egbulefu&Nwaoboli, 2023).

In their analysis of the role of social media in political election campaigns, Okidi et al. (2023) assert that these platforms have emerged as an indispensable media channel for political candidates and parties, facilitating effective campaigns and engagement of a wider electorate. Furthermore, Ajasa et al. (2024) argue that the proliferation of social media significantly influenced both the campaign strategies employed and the voter turnout observed during the 2023 presidential race.

Similarly, Nwaoboli and Asemah (2023) elucidate that diverse social media platforms have played a crucial role in mobilising voters, enhancing communication between politicians and the general populace, and offering cost-effective alternatives to traditional forms of campaign advertising. Political candidates increasingly leverage social media platforms to communicate their positions on critical issues, distribute campaign materials, and engage in focus group activities (Ajasa et al., 2023). Empirical studies (Apuke & Tunca, 2018; Mustapha et al., 2023; Muzaffar et al., 2020; Nnamani & Okafor, 2021; and Okpala et al., 2023) underscore the significance of social media as an essential and transformative medium for educating and influencing the electorate, particularly during election periods. The pervasive reach and immediacy of these platforms enable candidates to effectively shape public discourse and mobilise voter engagement in ways that traditional media cannot.

In Nigeria, social media influence is profound. As of 2021, the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC) reported that over 100 million Nigerians accessed the internet, with a large proportion actively using social media platforms. This vast reach has democratised information flows, connecting individuals across borders and fostering a more inclusive global society.

The role of social media has become increasingly pronounced in political contexts, particularly in political communication, mobilisation, and participation. Kleinnijenhuis et. al. (2019) noted that election campaigns today rely on both traditional media (radio and television) and social media platforms (like Facebook and X) to reach constituents. Political parties and candidates now place substantial emphasis on their social media presence, understanding its influence on their public image and reputation. In Nigeria, political figures utilise social media platforms to engage with the country's substantial youth population, a key segment of eligible voters, by connecting with them in ways that are accessible and relatable.

The shift from traditional face-to-face campaigning to digital or electronic campaigning in Nigeria has underscored the social media transformative role in the political arena, allowing for mass mobilisation, citizen engagement, and influence on electoral processes. This change has brought about new dynamics in how political narratives are constructed and disseminated, effectively reshaping the Nigerian political



landscape (Momoh, 2019). Media scholars (Fountaine, 2017; Himelboim et al., 2014; and Rose & Bürger, 2014) note that the rapid adoption of platforms such as Instagram, X, Facebook, and YouTube highlights the social media role in promoting political awareness and participatory dialogue. Social media has empowered citizens to actively engage in political discourse and contributed to heightened civic involvement and public scrutiny. An understanding of how the political messages on social media move the youths and how they contribute to those messages themselves, is therefore, imperative. This study examines how the usage of the social media shaped the campaigns for Nigeria's 2023 elections and political participation among the youths during the period.

Understanding the dynamics of political messaging on social media and its influence on youth engagement, as well as their contributions to these narratives, is essential. This study investigates the role of social media in shaping the electoral campaigns for Nigeria's 2023 Presidential election and its influence among undergraduates. Through this analysis, the study aims to elucidate the ways in which X platform serves as both a conduit for political discourse and a catalyst for civic involvement among young voters.

The rise of digital media has revolutionized access to political content, enabling users to engage on-demand, from any location and device, at any time. This shift has fostered new media communities with enhanced interactivity, allowing for creative user engagement and feedback, which marks a departure from the more linear nature of traditional media (Egbulefu & Nwaoboli, 2023). Unlike traditional media, digital media thrives on its interactive qualities, directly engaging users and transforming the nature of political communication.

In Nigeria, the 2023 Presidential election underscored the influence of social media, particularly X (formerly known as Twitter), in the electioneering process. Social media platforms have become essential for organizing political campaigns, driving ideological narratives, mobilizing voters, and amplifying political engagement. X's data enables analyses, such as sentiment analysis, that can offer insights into public opinion and potentially model electoral outcomes, thus providing a powerful tool for understanding political dynamics. Despite these advantages, however, the implications of such social media engagement remain underexplored, particularly concerning how it affects young voters, their political awareness, involvement, and decision-making processes.

This study specifically addresses the influence of X on Nigeria's 2023 Presidential election campaign, focusing on undergraduate students as a demographic group with high social media activity and significant electoral influence. This research investigates how exposure to political content on X influences this undergraduates' political awareness, participation, and candidate preference. Additionally, this study highlights the need for political sensitisation and digital literacy programs to empower both the electorate and politicians in fully utilising social media's potential while safeguarding freedom of speech. Therefore, this research is crucial in understanding the specific influence of X on political engagement within Nigeria's youth sector, a vital segment of the electorate, and provides a basis for developing informed strategies for future campaigns.

This research seeks to investigate the influence of X social media platform (formerly known as Twitter), on the attitudes and behaviours of undergraduates in Nigeria. By examining the influence of the 2023 Presidential election campaign on the X platform. This study aims to understand how such campaigns shape students' perspectives, opinions, and engagement. The X platform was selected due to its unique role in socio-political discourse in Nigeria, as evidenced by its significant influence during events such as the October 2020 EndSARS protests and its growing popularity among Nigerian users. Furthermore, this research explores how social media campaigns affect decision-making processes, information consumption, and the broader experiences of undergraduates, thereby enhancing understanding of the intersection between social media and political engagement within this demographic.



The main objective of this study is to examine the influence of social media on the 2023 Presidential election campaign among undergraduates of Yaba College of Technology (Yaba Tech), Lagos State, Nigeria. The specific objectives are to:

1. Ascertain the extent of political campaign awareness among undergraduates of Yaba Tech regarding the 2023 Presidential election on X platform.
2. Examine the influence of the 2023 Presidential election campaign available on the X platform among the selected Yaba Tech undergraduates.

Technological Determinism Theory

Technological Determinism began with Thorstein Veblen (1904-1920s) but gained real momentum with Marshall McLuhan (1964), who argued that technology is not just a supporting player; it is the main driver behind social and cultural changes. Technology influences how people think, connect, and structure their lives.

McLuhan's famous proposition, "the medium is the message," emphasises that the characteristics of a medium influence society more profoundly than the content it transmits. In this regard, digital platforms do not merely convey political messages; they actively reshape political behavior, participation patterns, and democratic engagement.

Consider today's digital environment; social media have completely changed communication and politics. Social media is not only a space for chatting or sharing photos; it's a powerful force that shapes beliefs, spreads ideas, and sparks collective movements. Political involvement has a new look. Young people, especially, can access information, voice their opinions, and take part in public conversations in ways that traditional media never allowed.

Technological determinism theory was adopted to understand how social media (x platform) influenced the opinions and actions of undergraduates at Yaba College of Technology concerning the 2023 Presidential election in Nigeria. These students browsed political content on Twitter (now X), Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, and more. The medium through which they received the 2023 Presidential campaign messages could influence their opinion about the 2023 Presidential election. Political Campaigns have massively shifted to the online medium, moving away from rallies and TV commercials to hashtags, sharing, and digital activism.

Technological Determinism theory is most suitable for this research because its postulation explains how the medium (x platform) influences the political process and behavioural outcome among the respondents. It was vividly evident that the last 2023 Presidential Election in Nigeria that social media platforms, especially X platform was not merely a medium of communication but it served as a transformative agent that structured political engagement among undergraduates. Consequently, investigating the influence of social media campaigns among students of Yaba College of Technology is theoretically grounded in the assumption that technological environments significantly determine social and political realities.

Together, these theories provide a framework to analyse how social media, particularly X, influences political engagement, voter behaviour, and campaign strategies among the selected respondents.

Method

This study used a quantitative research design, specifically using a descriptive survey approach, as it is best suited for collecting data relevant to the study objectives. This study employed a survey method to



gather substantial data from a broad sample, using a structured, closed-ended questionnaire as the primary data collection tool. Structured questionnaire offer an efficient means of gathering specific responses and facilitating reliable conclusions. Closed-ended questions were chosen to simplify responses and encourage a high response rate. The questionnaire was divided into three sections for gathering data with a total of 10-item questions. Section A addresses the demographic characteristics of the respondents. Section B contains items to elicit information on the extent of political campaign awareness among undergraduates of Yaba Tech regarding the 2023 Presidential election on X platform. Items in section C are designed to examine the influence of the 2023 Presidential election campaign available on the X platform among the selected Yaba Tech undergraduates.

The students from Yaba College of Technology, Lagos State were chosen as the population of this study with an approximate population size of 20,000, as reported by the official website of the school (www.yabatech.edu.ng).

The Taro Yamane formula was applied to determine an optimal sample size, accounting for precision level, confidence level, and estimated variability within the population, a useful method for studies involving large populations. The sample size derived from the calculation is 392, but the researchers were able to retrieve complete responses of 119 from the respondents. Hence, 119 respondents form the sample size for this study.

This study employed convenience sampling, a non-probability method in which participants are selected based on accessibility and willingness to participate. Data were collected using an online questionnaire, designed as a structured and closed-ended instrument. The questionnaire was administered via Google Forms and distributed through official students' WhatsApp groups, facilitated by class representatives and group administrators for a period of three months. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics, including frequency distributions and percentages, to summarise the responses effectively.

Construct validity and face validity were both assessed. A pilot test was conducted with students from Trinity University to verify the reliability of the questionnaire and ensure that it generated relevant responses consistent with the study's objectives. Cronbach's Alpha reliability pretesting procedure was used to test the internal consistency of the instrument items. The test was done among 30 respondents with 10-items questionnaire. The instrument demonstrates high internal consistency reliability and is suitable for the main study.

- Number of items (k) = 10
- Sum of item variances ($\sum \sigma^2_i$) = 8.40
- Total test variance (σ^2_t) = 42.00

Apply Cronbach's Alpha Formula

$$\alpha = k/(k - 1) [1 - (\sum \sigma_i^2 / \sigma_t^2)]$$

Substitute Values

$$\alpha = 10/9 [1 - (8.40 / 42.00)]$$

$$\alpha = 1.111 (1 - 0.20)$$

$$\alpha = 1.111 \times 0.80$$



$$\alpha = 0.89$$

Findings

Research Question One: To what extent are undergraduate students of Yaba Tech are aware of political campaigns regarding the 2023 Presidential election campaign on X platform?

Table 1: Awareness Rate of the 2023 Presidential Campaign on X

Variable	Frequency	Percentage %
Not aware	29	24.36
Slightly aware	51	42.85
Moderately aware	31	26.05
Highly aware	8	6.72
Total	119	100

Source: Field Survey 2024

Table 1 shows that awareness of the presidential campaign on X varies among respondents. This distribution reflects a diverse range of awareness levels, suggesting varying degrees of awareness and interest among the respondents.

Research Question Two: What is the influence of the 2023 Presidential election campaign available on X platform among the selected Yaba Tech undergraduates?

Table 2: Change of preferred candidate after seeing their campaign on X

Variable	Frequency	Percentage %
YES	78	65.54
NO	41	34.45
Total	119	100

Source: Field Survey 2024

As shown in Table 5, the Presidential campaign on X had a substantial influence on reshaping voter preferences among a majority of the respondents. The high percentage of respondents who changed their preferred candidate underscores the influential role of online platforms like X in shaping public opinion and influencing electoral outcomes.

Table 3: Extent to which the Presidential Campaign on X influenced the choice of the Presidential candidate

Variable	Frequency	Percentage %
Not at all	20	16.80
Slightly	41	34.45
Moderately	26	21.84
Significantly	26	21.84
Extremely	6	5.04
Total	119	100

Source: Field Survey 2024



Table 3 indicates the extent to which the Presidential Campaign on X influenced respondents' choice of candidate. This distribution highlights varying levels of influence, with a substantial portion of respondents indicating that the campaign played a significant role in shaping their political preferences. It underscores X platform's influence in political decision-making processes among its users.

Table 4: Presidential Campaign on X influenced participation in the 2023 Election

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	87	73.10
No	32	26.89
Total	119	100

Source: Field Survey 2024

Table 7 indicates that the campaign on the X platform played a pivotal role in motivating a large portion of respondents to engage actively in the electoral process.

Table 5: How the Presidential Campaign on the X platform influenced the engagement during the election

Variable	Frequency	Percentage %
Increased awareness of election issues	22	18.48
Increased motivation to vote	42	35.29
Encouraged to collect voters card	25	21.00
Influenced volunteer activities	20	16.80
No significant influence	10	8.40
Total	119	100

Source: Field Survey 2024

Table 5 illustrates how the presidential campaign on X influenced the engagement of respondents during the 2023 presidential election.

The findings highlight the important role of social media, especially platforms like X, in engaging young voters at Yaba Tech. The notable increases in motivation, voter awareness, and participation in electoral activities demonstrate the platform's effectiveness in fostering civic engagement among undergraduates. Additionally, its influence on volunteer activities indicates that political campaigns on X can mobilise students beyond just raising awareness. Understanding these dynamics is key for political strategists looking to enhance voter engagement and participation in future elections.



Table 6: Overall influence of X platform on political views about the 2023 Presidential Campaigns

Variable	Frequency	Percentage %
Very low	43	36.13
Low	20	16.80
Moderate	31	26.05
High	17	14.28
Very high	8	6.72
Total	119	100

Source: Field Survey 2024

Table 6 indicates the overall influence of X platform on political views regarding the 2023 Presidential Campaigns. This distribution indicates a spectrum of opinions regarding X social media platform's influence on shaping political views during the 2023 Presidential Campaigns. While a significant proportion perceived low to moderate influence, a notable segment also acknowledged high or very high influence.

Discussion

This study explores how social media campaigns, particularly on X (formerly Twitter), influenced the 2023 Presidential election among undergraduates at Yaba College of Technology. Drawing on Technological Determinism Theory from Veblen (1904) and McLuhan (1964), the research demonstrates that technology itself drives political engagement among young Nigerians. It's not just individuals making choices; technology sets the stage.

Most undergraduates were not simply aware of political messages on X; they actively interacted with them. Students acknowledged that the platform influenced their candidate choices and encouraged them to vote. McLuhan's well-known phrase, "the medium is the message," applies here. The way X operates, its rapid pace, interactivity, and the ease with which content goes viral, draws people in. Campaign messages are not just scrolled past. X compels users to react, share, and debate. Rather than remaining passive, users become active participants.

Yaba Tech's findings are consistent with previous studies. Apuke and Tunca (2018) found that social media is now central to Nigerian elections, driving both awareness and participation. Omotayo and Folorunso (2020) observed youth in Oyo State using social platforms to discuss campaign issues and monitor the voting process. Technology is not merely a tool; it fosters participatory democracy. Mustapha and colleagues (2023) discovered that social media use is directly linked to both online and offline political activities among young people.

Altogether, these studies reinforce Technological Determinism: new technologies reshape how people connect, organise, and decide. At Yaba Tech, students didn't just use X to discuss politics; X influenced their thinking and actions.

What stands out most is how social media created a new public sphere for political discourse. Traditional media, radio and newspapers, no longer capture youth attention. Now, students develop opinions, question candidates, and mobilise their peers instantly online. This transition mirrors what Ojebuyi and Salawu (2023) and Olorunnisola and Martin (2023) noted: Twitter transformed the dynamic between citizens and politicians in the 2023 elections.



At its core, technology now propels political conversations. X did more than inform Yaba Tech students; it reshaped their sense of citizenship. McLuhan was correct, technology expands what people can do. For Nigerian youth, X broadened their political engagement.

Ultimately, the role of social media in the 2023 election for Yaba Tech undergraduates affirms Technological Determinism. Technology did not merely transmit messages; it transformed political life. It awakened new awareness, inspired new forms of participation, and provided young Nigerians with a digital pathway to engage in democracy.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, it can be concluded that the social media campaign conducted on the X platform had a significant influence on the Nigerian 2023 Presidential election. The research indicates that engagement with the X platform during the presidential campaign notably influenced voter participation among respondents. Furthermore, the platform played a critical role in shaping the respondents' preferences for presidential candidates and heightened their motivation to engage in the electoral process.

The study underscores the potential of the X social media platform as a powerful tool for political campaigning. Its effectiveness appears to be contingent upon the alignment of campaign strategies with the interests and behaviours of the target demographic. Consequently, the findings highlight the noteworthy influence of the X platform on the electoral outcomes of the 2023 presidential election in Nigeria.

This study recommends that political campaigns on X should adopt targeted strategies to increase awareness among the uninformed. Utilising data-driven approaches can help engage these users effectively. To boost engagement, campaigns should offer diverse and interactive content, including multimedia elements like videos and live question-and-answer sessions. Maintaining a continuous social media presence is essential to sustain voter interest throughout the election period. By implementing these strategies, campaigns can enhance political awareness and participation among undergraduate students. Overall, while X is a useful platform for sharing political information, its engagement potential can be improved to foster greater political involvement among young people.

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