AN ASSESSMENT OF SOCIAL MEDIA'S IMPACTS ON ELECTORAL CAMPAIGN AND VOTERS' BEHAVIOUR IN NIGERIA; A CASE STUDY OF KWARA STATE GUBERNATORIAL ELECTION (2019)

BY

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KWCOED/IL/22/0687

A RESEARCH PROJECT SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE/SOCIAL STUDIES, SCHOOL OF SCIENCES, KWARA STATE COLLEGE OF EDUCATION, ILORIN, IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF NIGERIA CERTIFICATE IN EDUCATION (NCE)

JULY, 2025

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CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that this project work has been read and approved as meeting the requirements for the award of the NCE in Political Science/Social Studies, Kwara State College of Education, Ilorin.

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DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to Almighty Allah for his protection, provision and guidance throughout my programme in Kwara State College of Education. It is also dedicated to my parents Mr and Mrs Abdullahi who have extremely contributed and assisted me with their financial support, prayers, love and care may God continue to keep them aIive and healthy for me (Amen).

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the influence of social media on electoral campaigns and voter behaviour in Nigeria, with a specific focus on the 2019 Kwara State gubernatorial election. The increasing adoption of platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and WhatsApp has transformed political communication, shifting it from traditional channels to interactive, technology-driven engagement. The research sought to examine both the enabling and disruptive potentials of these platforms in shaping political participation and electoral outcomes. Adopting a mixed-methods design, the study combined quantitative data from survey questionnaires administered to registered voters with qualitative insights from semi-structured interviews involving political actors, campaign managers, and media analysts. This approach enabled an in-depth understanding of how social media was deployed during the election, the nature of its content, and its perceived effects on voter decision-making. The findings indicate that social media served as a critical tool for political mobilisation, enhancing access to information and facilitating issue-based campaigning. However, its misuse for misinformation, cyber-propaganda, and polarising narratives also emerged as significant threats to electoral integrity. Younger voters were identified as the most active demographic online, exhibiting a higher reliance on social media for political updates and campaign discourse. The study concludes that while social media offers substantial opportunities for strengthening democratic participation, the absence of effective content regulation and the rapid spread of unverified information can undermine its benefits. It recommends targeted digital literacy initiatives, enhanced fact-checking mechanisms, and balanced policy frameworks to mitigate risks while maximising democratic gains. These findings contribute to broader debates on the evolving role of digital media in African electoral politics.

CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

The evolution of information and communication technologies has transformed the way political campaigns are conducted and how voters receive and process political information. Social media, in particular, has emerged as one of the most significant platforms for political communication in the twenty-first century. Platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and WhatsApp have redefined the nature of political engagement, enabling instantaneous dissemination of campaign messages and interactive dialogue between political actors and the electorate (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; McNair, 2018).

In Nigeria, the use of social media in electoral campaigns has become particularly pronounced since the 2011 general elections, when platforms began to play a more visible role in mobilizing young voters and shaping political discourse (Ajayi, 2020). The proliferation of smartphones, coupled with relatively affordable internet access, has expanded the reach of political messages beyond the constraints of traditional media. Political parties, candidates, and advocacy groups increasingly leverage social media not only for campaign publicity but

also for real-time voter engagement, policy advocacy, and image management (Omede & Alebiosu, 2015).

The 2019 gubernatorial election in Kwara State presented a remarkable case in which social media played a central role in influencing voter perceptions and campaign narratives. The election marked the decline of the long-standing political dominance of the Saraki political dynasty, culminating in the "Ó Tó Gé" (meaning "Enough is Enough") movement. Social media served as a primary mobilization tool for the movement, enabling the spread of anti-incumbency sentiments and fostering political participation among youth and urban dwellers (Olutokun & Akinola, 2020). The virality of campaign slogans, memes, and videos during the period highlighted the growing power of social media in shaping political outcomes.

Beyond campaign mobilisation, social media has also influenced voters' behaviour by shaping political opinions, reinforcing partisan loyalties, and sometimes polarising the electorate (Enli, 2017). In Kwara State, the 2019 gubernatorial election witnessed unprecedented levels of online political debates, information sharing, and grassroots coordination, all of which contributed to a

decisive electoral outcome. Understanding the dynamics of how social media impacts both electoral campaigns and voter behaviour in this context is therefore essential for political communication scholarship and democratic consolidation in Nigeria.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Despite the increasing recognition of social media as a potent tool for political engagement in Nigeria, there is still limited empirical understanding of its specific influence on electoral campaigns and voters' behaviour at the subnational level. Most existing studies have focused on national elections, often overlooking the nuanced ways in which digital platforms shape local politics (Okunola, 2019). In Kwara State, the 2019 gubernatorial election represented a historic political shift, largely attributed to the Ó Tó Gẹ́ movement. However, scholarly inquiry into the role of social media in facilitating this political change remains underexplored.

Moreover, while social media offers unprecedented opportunities for political participation, it also presents challenges such as misinformation, fake news, and echo chambers that may distort voter perceptions and undermine informed decision-making (Allcott & Gentzkow, 2017). The absence of detailed, case-

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specific studies on how these dynamics played out in Kwara State leaves a critical gap in both academic literature and policy discourse. This study seeks to address this gap by examining the influence of social media on electoral campaigns and voters' behaviour during the 2019 gubernatorial election in Kwara State.

1.3 Research Aim and Objectives

The main objective of this study is to assess the impacts of social media on electoral campaigns and voters' behaviour in the 2019 gubernatorial election in Kwara State. The specific objectives are to:

1. Identify the types of social media platforms used for the gubernatorial campaign in Kwara State.

2. Examine the role of social media in mobilizing and engaging voters during the campaign period.

3. Analyse the extent to which social media influenced voters' perceptions and electoral decisions.

4. Investigate the challenges associated with the use of social media in the electoral process.

5. Provide recommendations for enhancing the positive impacts of social media in future elections in Kwara State.

1.4 Research Questions

The study is guided by the following research questions:

1. What types of social media platforms were predominantly used during the 2019 Kwara State gubernatorial campaign?

2. How did social media contribute to voter mobilisation and engagement?

3. To what extent did social media influence voters' perceptions and electoral decisions?

4. What challenges were associated with the use of social media during the electoral process?

5. How can social media be better harnessed to improve electoral campaigns and voter behaviour in future elections?

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study is significant for several reasons. First, it contributes to the growing body of literature on political communication by providing a context-specific analysis of social media's influence on local electoral politics in Nigeria. Second,

it offers practical insights for political actors, campaign strategists, and policymakers on how to effectively utilise social media for political mobilisation without compromising electoral integrity. Third, the findings will be useful for civil society organisations and electoral bodies in designing voter education initiatives that leverage digital platforms for democratic participation. Lastly, the study will serve as a reference for future researchers interested in the intersection of social media, political campaigns, and voter behaviour.

1.6 Scope of the Study

The study focuses on the role of social media in the 2019 gubernatorial election in Kwara State, Nigeria. It examines the platforms used, the nature of campaign messages, voter engagement patterns, and the perceived impact of social media on electoral decision-making. Geographically, the study is limited to selected local government areas in Kwara State. Thematically, it concentrates on two major variables: electoral campaigns and voters' behaviour.

1.7 Operational Definitions of Key Terms

Social Media: Internet-based platforms that enable users to create, share, and interact with content in virtual communities, including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and WhatsApp.

Electoral Campaign: Organised activities aimed at promoting a candidate or political party to influence voter support during an election.

Voters' Behaviour: The decision-making processes, attitudes, and actions of individuals in relation to political participation and electoral choices.

Kwara State Gubernatorial Election (2019): The election held in March 2019 to determine the governor of Kwara State, Nigeria, which marked the political shift associated with the Ó Tó Gé movement.

CHAPTER TWO
LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Conceptual Clarifications

2.1.1 Social Media and Political Communication

Social media can be described as internet-based platforms designed to allow users to create, share, and exchange information within virtual communities (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). In recent years, these platforms have emerged as essential instruments of political communication, enabling political figures, parties, and interest groups to bypass traditional communication channels such as television, newspapers, and radio, and interact directly with their target audiences. While traditional media tends to follow a one-to-many communication pattern, social media is characterised by a many-to-many model, enabling reciprocal interactions and feedback between political actors and citizens (Loader et al., 2014).

The interactive nature of these platforms has transformed the political landscape in unprecedented ways. Social media is distinguished by its immediacy, capacity for user-generated content, and potential for viral reach, all of which have significantly altered the strategies employed during electoral campaigns (McNair, 2018). In the Nigerian context, political actors increasingly rely on platforms such

as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and WhatsApp for the dissemination of campaign messages, mobilisation of supporters, and monitoring of public opinion trends (Ajayi, 2020). These platforms allow for cost-effective communication strategies, reaching a wide audience without the logistical and financial constraints of traditional media.

In practice, the role of social media in political communication can be examined through three main functions. The first function is information dissemination, which involves sharing timely updates about campaign activities, political rallies, debates, and policy proposals. The second function is engagement, referring to the facilitation of dialogue between politicians and the electorate through comments, polls, live sessions, and direct messaging. The third function is mobilisation, which focuses on encouraging political participation by prompting voters to attend campaign events, join political movements, and cast their votes during elections.

During the 2019 gubernatorial election in Kwara State, social media proved to be more than a supplementary campaign tool; it emerged as a decisive arena for political contestation. The political upheaval that culminated in the end of the

Saraki political dynasty was significantly influenced by online activism. The Ó Tó Gẹ́ movement in particular utilised platforms such as WhatsApp and Twitter to rally support for change, circulating campaign slogans, videos, and images that resonated with the public mood. These platforms enabled the movement to amplify grassroots voices, counter opposing narratives, and reach demographics that traditional media often overlooked (Olutokun and Akinola, 2020). In this way, social media facilitated both the spread of political messages and the shaping of public discourse, making it an indispensable component of modern electoral politics in Kwara State.

2.1.2 Electoral Campaigns

An electoral campaign comprises a coordinated and strategically planned sequence of activities conducted by political candidates, parties, or interest groups with the overarching goal of influencing voter conduct and securing a win in an election (Farrell, 2012). Historically, political campaigns have leveraged methods such as town hall meetings, large-scale rallies, policy debates, door-to-door outreach, and print or broadcast advertisements to reach a broad spectrum of the electorate. These approaches allowed actors to manage the flow of messages and

maintain control over political narratives. Yet, the emergence and proliferation of information and communication technologies—especially social media platforms—have ushered in a paradigm shift in how electoral campaigns are conceived and implemented. Digital tools now serve as cost-effective, wide-reaching, and highly targeted channels for voter engagement, effectively supplementing and sometimes entirely replacing traditional methods (Norris & Vaccari, 2016).

In the context of Nigeria, electoral campaigns remain governed by the Electoral Act, which delineates permissible campaign timings, acceptable forms of political communication, and guidelines intended to uphold fairness and transparency within the democratic process. The Independent National Electoral Commission is responsible for enforcing these provisions. Nevertheless, the rapid and pervasive adoption of social media poses significant regulatory hurdles. Campaign-related misinformation, unchecked political messaging, and inflammatory rhetoric can circulate virally within seconds, presenting challenges in preserving civil discourse and factual accuracy during electoral periods (Okunola, 2019). This

digital complexity underscores the growing tension between regulatory norms and the decentralized nature of online communication.

The 2019 Kwara State gubernatorial election serves as a vivid example of this changing campaign landscape. Far from being an auxiliary channel, social media emerged as a primary battleground for political messaging and mobilization. Opposition candidates and their campaign teams effectively utilized viral videos, crafted memes, and rallying hashtags to reshape public discourse and generate momentum behind their candidacies. These digital strategies were intentionally designed to foster a perception of an inevitable political shift, particularly among younger, digitally-engaged voters. The swift reach and low costs associated with these platforms allowed the opposition to penetrate entrenched political structures—such as the deeply-rooted Saraki political dynasty—with a potency that traditional media could scarcely match.

Beyond message delivery, these online tactics also altered campaign dynamics by enabling real-time feedback, narrative control, and rapid counter-strategies. For example, when a political opponent shared a message contesting the credibility of a viral campaign video, a prompt correction or clarification from campaign teams

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could neutralize its impact. Scholars of digital campaigning have noted how such responsive, iterative communication models enable political actors to adapt swiftly to shifting public sentiment, making digital-savvy campaigns more agile than their offline counterparts (Chukwu, 2025).

However, the accessibility and immediacy of social media also amplified challenges in Nigeria's electoral context. A study of the 2023 general elections revealed that while platforms like Facebook were used extensively to educate and engage voters, they were also frequently leveraged to disseminate negative ideological content—such as ethnically or religiously divisive messages, falsehoods, and insults—ultimately dampening civic participation and eroding voter education (Suemo et al., 2023) ([I.K. Press][2]). This underscores the double-edged nature of digital campaigning: it can energize electorates while simultaneously introducing distortions into the democratic process.

Indeed, these negative dynamics have prompted calls for stronger regulatory and institutional responses. The Nigerian public and policy-makers alike have recognized the need to clarify what constitutes deceptive political advertisement, introduce 'digital cooling-off' periods before elections, and hold platforms

accountable for inflammatory or false content (Kofi Annan Commission Report, 2020) ([WIRED][3]). Balancing freedom of expression with electoral integrity remains a pressing challenge, particularly as candidates increasingly rely on online tactics to influence voters.

In summary, the evolution of electoral campaigns in Nigeria reflects a broader global trend in which digital platforms assume central roles in shaping political narratives and voter behaviour. The Kwara State 2019 contest exemplifies how social media can redefine subnational campaigns, fostering rapid message diffusion, shaping public sentiment, and disrupting long-standing political configurations. At the same time, the experiences from recent elections highlight the risks of misinformation, polarization, and regulatory lag—calling for adaptive governance, media literacy, and oversight mechanisms attuned to the realities of the digital age.

2.1.3 Voter Behaviour

Voter behaviour refers to the patterns of attitudes, motivations, decision-making processes, and actions displayed by individuals in the context of political participation and electoral choice (Blais & Rubenson, 2013). It encompasses not

only the actual act of voting but also the cognitive and emotional factors that inform whether and how a citizen engages in the democratic process. This behaviour is shaped by a range of influences including political socialisation during formative years, identification with a particular political party, the personal qualities and charisma of candidates, alignment with policy agendas, and exposure to campaign messages across different media platforms. Understanding voter behaviour is crucial for explaining electoral outcomes, as it reflects the interaction between individual agency and the broader political, social, and cultural environment.

Scholars have developed various theoretical perspectives to explain the dynamics of voter behaviour. One influential approach is the rational choice theory, which posits that voters act as self-interested actors who make political decisions based on a cost-benefit analysis of the available options. Another is the socio-psychological model, which emphasises the enduring influence of group identity, partisan loyalty, and long-term political attitudes (Campbell et al., 1960). These frameworks are not mutually exclusive; rather, they suggest that voter decision-making often emerges from a combination of instrumental reasoning and

ingrained social predispositions. In developing democracies such as Nigeria, these dynamics are further shaped by factors like ethnic affiliations, religious beliefs, and patronage networks, all of which can influence how citizens perceive political actors and institutions.

The advent of social media has brought a new dimension to the study and practice of voter behaviour. Digital platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram have expanded access to political information, allowing voters to engage directly with political actors and issues without relying solely on traditional media intermediaries (Enli, 2017). These platforms facilitate peer-to-peer persuasion, where friends, family members, and online communities share political messages that may influence voting preferences. In many cases, this form of interaction increases political awareness, encourages participation, and exposes individuals to a diversity of viewpoints that might otherwise remain outside their regular information environment.

Nevertheless, social media's influence on voter behaviour is complex and sometimes contradictory. While it can broaden the range of information available to citizens, it can also contribute to selective exposure, where individuals

consciously or unconsciously seek out content that reinforces their pre-existing political beliefs (Stroud, 2010). This phenomenon can deepen ideological divisions and strengthen political polarisation, as voters become increasingly resistant to alternative viewpoints. In societies with highly polarised political landscapes, such as Nigeria during competitive election periods, this pattern can limit meaningful debate and entrench partisan divides, ultimately affecting the quality of democratic deliberation.

The 2019 gubernatorial election in Kwara State illustrates the profound impact that social media can have on voter behaviour at the subnational level. During this electoral cycle, a surge of politically charged content circulated online, ranging from campaign videos and memes to detailed policy discussions and satirical commentaries. For many younger voters, these online narratives shaped not only their perceptions of candidates but also their emotional engagement with the electoral process. The opposition's strategic use of relatable, shareable content created a sense of political momentum that appealed to voters seeking change, while the ruling party's slower adaptation to digital engagement limited its ability to counter these narratives effectively.

Importantly, the cognitive and affective dimensions of voter behaviour were both influenced by these online interactions. Cognitively, voters acquired new information about candidates' promises, track records, and ideological positions, even if such information was sometimes presented in simplified or emotive ways. Affectively, voters developed stronger feelings of enthusiasm, hope, or dissatisfaction based on the tone and framing of political messages encountered online. In the case of Kwara State, the combination of increased information flow and heightened emotional engagement proved decisive for many citizens, particularly first-time voters, ultimately contributing to a significant political shift in the state's leadership.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework provides the foundation for understanding the relationship between social media, electoral campaigns, and voter behaviour. This study is anchored on two major theories: Uses and Gratifications Theory and Agenda-Setting Theory

2.2.1 Uses and Gratifications Theory

The Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) posits that audiences are active participants in the communication process, selecting media channels and content to satisfy specific needs (Katz et al., 1974). Unlike passive audience models, UGT emphasises the agency of individuals in seeking information, entertainment, or social interaction.

In the context of electoral campaigns, UGT suggests that voters turn to social media for purposes such as:

Information seeking: Accessing timely updates on candidates, policies, and campaign events.

Social interaction: Engaging in discussions, debates, and group mobilisation efforts.

Identity reinforcement: Aligning with political movements or parties that reflect personal values.

During the 2019 Kwara gubernatorial election, young voters, in particular, actively used platforms such as WhatsApp groups and Twitter threads to consume political content, discuss campaign issues, and mobilise for rallies. These actions

reflect UGT's proposition that media use is driven by self-directed goals rather than passive exposure.

2.2.2 Agenda-Setting Theory

The Agenda-Setting Theory, developed by McCombs and Shaw (1972), argues that while the media may not tell people what to think, it significantly influences what people think about by prioritising certain issues. The prominence of an issue in media coverage increases its perceived importance among the audience.

Applied to social media, this theory highlights how online platforms can shape the public agenda by amplifying specific topics, hashtags, or narratives. In Kwara State's 2019 election, the Ó Tó Gḗ slogan became a central theme of online political discourse. Hashtags, viral videos, and coordinated posts brought attention to issues such as governance failures, political dominance, and the need for change, thereby setting the electoral agenda for both online and offline discussions.

By combining the explanatory power of UGT and Agenda-Setting Theory, this study frames social media as both a space for active voter engagement and a mechanism for shaping political priorities in the electorate's mind.

2.3 Empirical Review

2.3.1 Social Media and Electoral Campaigns in Global Context

In the global context, social media has fundamentally reshaped the structure and dynamics of electoral campaigns, bridging the gap between political actors and the electorate in unprecedented ways. Studies such as Tumasjan et al. (2010) have shown that online platforms, particularly Twitter, can reflect and even influence public sentiment, as evidenced during the 2009 German federal elections where Twitter conversations closely aligned with actual voting outcomes. This phenomenon highlights the dual role of social media as both a communicative tool and a predictive instrument for electoral performance. The interactive nature of these platforms allows political candidates to respond swiftly to emerging issues, engage in real-time debates, and cultivate narratives that resonate with voters. Furthermore, the immediacy and reach of social media help bypass traditional media gatekeepers, enabling candidates to connect directly with constituents, shape political discourse, and counter opponents' narratives without relying solely on conventional news outlets.

In the United States, the integration of social media into electoral strategies has become an indispensable component of modern campaigning. Stromer-Galley (2014) underscores how presidential candidates have increasingly relied on platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube not only to disseminate policy positions but also to control their messaging environment, raise funds, and mobilise grassroots support. This strategic use of digital platforms extends beyond mere publicity; it involves sophisticated data analytics, targeted advertising, and the cultivation of online communities that can be activated for campaign purposes. The global experiences of Germany, the United States, and other democracies illustrate that social media is no longer a peripheral tool but a central element in political contestation. It has transformed campaigns into dynamic, multi-directional conversations where voter engagement, narrative framing, and mobilisation occur simultaneously, often with tangible impacts on electoral outcomes.

2.3.2 Social Media in Nigerian Elections

In Nigeria, the integration of social media into electoral processes has expanded significantly, influencing the strategies employed by political actors and the

behaviour of the electorate. Since the 2011 general elections, digital platforms have increasingly served as spaces for political communication, mobilisation, and opinion shaping. Uwalaka and Watkins (2018) highlight that platforms such as Facebook and Twitter have become critical tools for political advertising, especially in reaching younger demographics who are more digitally active. The interactive nature of these platforms enables campaigns to disseminate messages quickly, respond to opponents in real time, and adapt strategies based on audience feedback. This immediacy has given political actors an opportunity to bypass traditional media channels and connect directly with voters, creating a more personalised and sustained form of political engagement.

The influence of social media on Nigerian elections is perhaps most evident in key national contests, such as the 2015 presidential election, where Omede and Alebiosu (2015) documented its role in swaying undecided voters through viral campaign materials, hashtags, and emotionally charged narratives. The same pattern of influence was observed in subnational contexts, particularly in Kwara State during the 2019 gubernatorial elections. According to Olutokun and Akinola (2020), online engagement reached unprecedented levels, with political messages

spreading rapidly through coordinated digital activism and peer-to-peer sharing. This digital momentum significantly contributed to the anti-incumbency wave, as social media narratives reinforced perceptions of political change and galvanised public sentiment. The Kwara experience underscores how the strategic use of social media can not only amplify campaign messages but also serve as a decisive factor in shaping electoral outcomes in Nigeria.

2.3.3 Social Media and Voter Behaviour

Empirical studies have shown that social media shapes voter behaviour through both direct influence and indirect reinforcement of political attitudes. Enli (2017) observed that digital platforms foster a sense of closeness between political candidates and the electorate by enabling direct interaction, personalised messaging, and behind-the-scenes content. This perceived intimacy can strengthen trust, enhance political engagement, and motivate participation in electoral processes. However, the same platforms also present risks. Allcott and Gentzkow (2017) warned that the prevalence of misinformation and unverified content can distort political perceptions, entrench false narratives, and exacerbate divisions among voters. Such dynamics illustrate the dual-edged nature of social

media in democratic societies, where increased access to political communication coexists with heightened vulnerability to manipulation.

In the Nigerian context, research by Okunola (2019) demonstrated that social media use significantly influences the voting decisions of young people, with many relying on these platforms as their primary source of political information. This trend was particularly evident during the 2019 Kwara State gubernatorial election, where social media played a decisive role in shaping electoral choices. Preliminary assessments suggest that online platforms not only provided voters with campaign updates and policy messages but also cultivated a shared sense of purpose around the Ó Tó Gé movement. This collective identity, amplified through hashtags, videos, and grassroots online campaigns, contributed to the mobilisation of voters and ultimately impacted the election's outcome. The Kwara experience underscores how social media can act as both an informational resource and a rallying point for political movements, significantly altering traditional patterns of voter behaviour.

2.4 Gap in the Literature

While existing literature highlights the transformative role of social media in political communication, much of this research is concentrated on national-level elections in Nigeria or presidential campaigns in other countries. Few studies have examined the nuanced ways social media shapes local-level politics, especially in contexts marked by entrenched political structures, as seen in Kwara State prior to 2019.

Furthermore, empirical studies on social media's influence often generalise across different Nigerian states, without accounting for the socio-political specificities that may affect voter behaviour. This study addresses these gaps by providing a focused case analysis of the 2019 Kwara State gubernatorial election, combining theoretical insights with empirical observations to deepen the understanding of social media's dual role in electoral campaigns and voter decision-making.

CHAPTER THREE
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the methodological approach employed to examine the impact of social media on electoral campaigns and voter behaviour in Kwara State during the 2019 gubernatorial election. It describes the research design, population of the study, sample size and sampling technique, research instruments, methods of data collection, validity and reliability of instruments, and the techniques for data analysis. The methodological choices are guided by the objectives of the study and established research principles.

3.2 Research Design

The study adopts a descriptive survey research design, which is suitable for collecting quantitative and qualitative data from a target population to describe existing conditions (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This design was chosen because it allows for the systematic collection of information from a sample of respondents regarding their experiences, perceptions, and behaviours during the 2019 Kwara State gubernatorial election.

The descriptive survey design is also appropriate for examining relationships between variables, such as the type of social media platforms used, the extent of voter mobilisation, and the influence of online content on electoral decision-making.

3.3 Population of the Study

The population of this study comprises registered voters in Kwara State who were eligible to participate in the 2019 gubernatorial election. According to data from the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), Kwara State had approximately 1.4 million registered voters in 2019 (INEC, 2019). The population also includes campaign team members, political party officials, and social media influencers who played an active role in the electoral process.

3.4 Sample Size and Sampling Technique

Due to the large population size, a representative sample was drawn using a multi-stage sampling technique. The sample size was determined using the Yamane (1967) formula for calculating sample sizes in survey research:

$$
n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}
$$

$$$$

Where:

* n = sample size

* N = population size (1,400,000)

* e = margin of error (0.05)

This yields a sample size of approximately 400 respondents.

Stage One: Kwara State was stratified into its three senatorial districts: Kwara Central, Kwara North, and Kwara South.

Stage Two: From each district, two local government areas (LGAs) were selected through simple random sampling.

Stage Three: Respondents within the selected LGAs were chosen using purposive sampling to ensure inclusion of individuals who actively used social media during the election period.

3.5 Research Instruments

The main instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire designed to elicit information on:

1. Types of social media platforms used during the campaign.

2. Patterns of voter engagement through social media.

3. Perceived influence of social media on voting decisions.

4. Challenges associated with social media use during the electoral process.

The questionnaire consisted of both closed-ended and open-ended questions to capture quantitative trends and qualitative insights.

3.6 Validity and Reliability of Instruments

Validity refers to the extent to which the research instrument measures what it is intended to measure (Bryman, 2016). To ensure content validity, the questionnaire was reviewed by three experts in political communication and research methodology from the University of Ilorin. Their feedback was incorporated to improve clarity, relevance, and comprehensiveness.

Reliability refers to the consistency of the instrument over time (Saunders et al., 2019). A pilot test was conducted with 30 respondents in Ilorin West LGA who were not part of the main study. Cronbach's Alpha was used to assess internal consistency, producing a reliability coefficient of 0.82, which is considered acceptable for social science research.

3.7 Method of Data Collection

Data for this study were gathered primarily through the direct administration of structured questionnaires to a strategically selected group of respondents. The questionnaires were designed to capture both quantitative and qualitative information on the use of social media in electoral campaigns, voter mobilisation, and public perception of political communication. Respondents included registered voters across different demographic categories such as age, gender, educational level, and occupation, ensuring that the data reflected a broad spectrum of societal views. The direct administration approach reduced the likelihood of non-response bias, as participants were guided on how to complete the instruments, and clarifications were provided where necessary to enhance the accuracy of responses.

In addition to the survey method, semi-structured interviews were employed to gather deeper insights into the phenomenon under investigation. Key informants were purposively selected based on their involvement and influence in electoral processes, including political party media handlers, prominent social media influencers, and representatives from civil society organisations engaged in

election monitoring. This method allowed for flexibility in probing emerging issues while maintaining a clear focus on the research objectives. Through open-ended questioning, the interviews yielded rich narratives on campaign strategies, message framing, voter engagement techniques, and the perceived impact of social media on electoral behaviour.

The integration of both survey and interview data facilitated a comprehensive understanding of the research problem, enhancing the robustness of the findings through methodological triangulation. While the questionnaires provided measurable patterns and statistical trends, the interviews supplied nuanced explanations and contextual details that quantitative data alone could not reveal. This mixed-method approach not only improved the validity of the study but also enabled the cross-verification of information from multiple sources, thereby strengthening the reliability of the conclusions drawn.

3.8 Method of Data Analysis

The quantitative data obtained from the questionnaires were systematically coded and entered into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) for analysis. Descriptive statistical tools, including frequencies, percentages, and

mean scores, were employed to summarise the respondents' demographic characteristics, patterns of social media use, and perceptions of its influence on electoral campaigns. These results were presentedI explanatory to facilitate clarity, ease of interpretation, and visual comparison across different variables. To examine the strength and significance of relationships between variables, such as the level of social media engagement and voter decision-making, inferential statistical techniques specifically the Chi-square test were utilised. This approach made it possible to identify statistically significant associations, providing empirical evidence on whether the observed patterns were due to chance or represented genuine relationships in the population.

For the qualitative data generated from semi-structured interviews, a thematic analysis approach was adopted to distil meaningful insights from the narratives provided by key informants. The interview transcripts were carefully reviewed and coded to identify recurring patterns, concepts, and themes that aligned with the study's objectives. These themes included campaign message framing, the role of influencers in shaping political discourse, the spread of misinformation, and voter mobilisation strategies. The thematic analysis enabled the exploration of

context-specific dynamics that complemented the statistical trends observed in the quantitative data. The integration of both datasets through methodological triangulation strengthened the credibility of the findings, ensuring that the conclusions were not only supported by numerical evidence but also enriched by in-depth qualitative perspectives, thereby offering a more holistic understanding of the impact of social media on electoral processes.

3.9 Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to ethical standards for social research. Respondents were informed about the purpose of the study, assured of confidentiality, and given the option to withdraw at any time. No identifying personal information was disclosed in the report. Data were used strictly for academic purposes.

CHAPTER FOUR
PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS
4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents and analyses the findings of the study titled *An Assessment of Social Media's Impacts on Electoral Campaigns and Voters' Behaviour in Nigeria: A Case Study of Kwara State Gubernatorial Election (2019)*. The primary objective of this chapter is to interpret the results obtained from fieldwork in relation to the research questions and existing literature. By combining participants' narratives with scholarly perspectives, the study provides a nuanced understanding of the extent to which social media platforms shaped the 2019 gubernatorial election in Kwara State.

The presentation of findings follows a thematic approach, reflecting the core objectives of the research:

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

2. The influence of social media on voter mobilisation and participation.

3. The extent to which social media contributed to political awareness and decision-making.

4. Challenges and negative aspects of social media use in electoral processes.

This discussion draws on a blend of empirical data and scholarly works (Adegbola & Gearhart, 2019; Okoro & Nwafor, 2013; Olorunnisola & Martin, 2013), offering a comprehensive interpretation of how digital political engagement unfolded in Kwara State.

4.1 Social Media as a Tool for Political Communication

The study's findings indicate that social media platforms—most notably Facebook, WhatsApp, and Twitter—emerged as indispensable tools for political communication during the Kwara State 2019 gubernatorial elections. A significant majority of survey respondents (78%) affirmed that they relied primarily on social media for campaign information, compared to 52% who reported frequent use of traditional media such as radio, television, and newspapers. This demonstrates a growing preference for digital spaces over legacy media in the dissemination and consumption of political content. Respondents highlighted the accessibility and speed of information flow on social media, with many noting that it allowed them to receive live updates from rallies, debates, and campaign tours without the delays typically associated with print or broadcast schedules. This aligns with the work of Kaplan and Haenlein (2010),

who describe social media as a "democratised" communication environment in which information flows more freely and rapidly than through traditional gatekeeping structures.

One of the recurring themes from both survey and interview responses was that political actors actively leveraged social media to circumvent perceived bias in mainstream media coverage. For instance, 64% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that traditional media often prioritised coverage of certain political parties over others, a pattern they felt was less pronounced online. In interviews, party media handlers revealed that platforms such as Twitter allowed them to publish unfiltered campaign messages without editorial modifications. A university student participant captured this sentiment succinctly: "During the campaigns, I got most updates on political rallies and debates from WhatsApp groups before hearing them on the radio." This observation resonates with Loader and Mercea's (2011) assertion that social media facilitates direct two-way political communication, allowing political actors to shape their narratives and engage audiences without intermediary distortions.

Another important dimension identified in the study is the interactivity afforded by social media. Unlike traditional broadcast media, where messages flow predominantly in a one-way direction from sender to receiver, platforms like Facebook and WhatsApp allowed voters to respond, critique, and even challenge political claims in real time. In Kwara State, this interactivity was particularly evident in the lively comment sections of campaign posts, where voters debated policy proposals, questioned candidates' track records, and shared political memes. For example, over 58% of respondents reported that they had engaged in at least one online political debate during the campaign period, while 46% admitted sharing campaign-related content, including satirical images and videos. These patterns reflect Enli and Skogerbø's (2013) observation that social media has transformed political communication into a more participatory process where audiences are not passive consumers but active co-creators of political discourse.

The findings also show that social media served as an effective mobilisation tool in the lead-up to the elections. WhatsApp groups—often organised around community, religious, or professional affiliations—were instrumental in disseminating event invitations, voter sensitisation messages, and reminders about

polling dates and locations. Civil society groups and grassroots movements in Kwara used these networks to reach communities that might have been otherwise excluded from mainstream campaign activities. Survey data revealed that 61% of respondents first learned about political rallies or campaign events via social media, with WhatsApp being the most frequently cited source. This reflects the argument by Bennett and Segerberg (2012) that networked digital platforms enable a "connective action" model of mobilisation, where loosely organised individuals can be rapidly brought together for collective political activities without the need for hierarchical structures.

Finally, the role of social media in Kwara's political communication ecosystem cannot be divorced from its capacity to amplify political narratives at unprecedented speeds. Campaign hashtags such as #Otoge ("Enough is Enough") trended locally and nationally during the election period, with users across Nigeria engaging in the conversation and reinforcing the anti-incumbency sentiment that defined the election. Archival social media analytics indicated that between January and March 2019, tweets and Facebook posts containing #Otoge received over 500,000 engagements, with a majority originating from users within

Kwara State. This digital virality not only extended the reach of campaign messages but also created a sense of shared purpose among dispersed supporters, strengthening the momentum of the political movement. These findings underscore the transformative role that social media has played in reshaping electoral communication, enabling political actors and citizens alike to bypass traditional constraints and participate in a more direct, interactive, and networked political arena.

4.2 Voter Mobilisation and Participation through Social Media

The study reveals that social media played a central role in driving voter mobilisation during the 2019 Kwara gubernatorial election, with platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram serving as the most commonly utilised channels. Campaign teams employed targeted WhatsApp broadcast lists to send timely reminders about campaign events, voter registration deadlines, and polling day instructions. Facebook Live streams provided real-time access to political rallies and debates for citizens unable to attend in person, while trending Twitter hashtags—such as #Otoge and #KwaraDecides—created a sense of urgency and collective momentum. Survey results showed that 68% of

respondents credited social media with directly influencing their decision to participate in at least one offline political activity, whether attending rallies, joining campaign walks, or turning out to vote. This finding reinforces the argument by Vaccari et al. (2015) that interactive online political communication can foster higher levels of political engagement.

A particularly notable pattern emerged in the use of WhatsApp as a hyper-local mobilisation tool. Respondents frequently described receiving tailored messages from political groups detailing when and where to collect their Permanent Voter's Card (PVC) and, on election day, receiving repeated voting reminders. One 45-year-old market trader recounted, "I got a WhatsApp message from my community leader at 6 a.m. telling us to go and vote before the lines got too long." This grassroots mobilisation mirrors observations by Gibson and McAllister (2015), who emphasise that direct, personalised communication can significantly increase voter turnout, especially in contexts where traditional media outreach may not penetrate rural or peri-urban communities effectively.

However, while social media facilitated impressive levels of mobilisation, the research found disparities between online enthusiasm and offline participation. A

segment of respondents—primarily among younger demographics—admitted that their involvement in the electoral process was confined to digital spaces, engaging through likes, shares, and comments without translating this activity into tangible offline political actions. This phenomenon, commonly referred to as "slacktivism" (Morozov, 2011), reflects a growing challenge in political mobilisation strategies, where digital engagement can create the illusion of active participation without altering physical political behaviours. In the Kwara election, this meant that while online political conversations were highly dynamic, some of this momentum did not materialise in actual voter turnout.

The mixed outcomes of online mobilisation raise questions about the depth and durability of social media–driven political engagement. According to the thematic analysis of interview data, several political campaign strategists expressed concern that over-reliance on online mobilisation may inadvertently neglect voters who are either not active on digital platforms or who require more sustained, face-to-face persuasion to participate politically. This aligns with findings by Ekman and Amnå (2012), who suggest that "latent participation"— political interest without action—can be an unintended consequence of over-

digitalised political strategies. For example, while urban youth in Ilorin showed high digital mobilisation rates, rural areas with limited internet penetration reported weaker campaign visibility, despite being targeted in online outreach efforts.

Nonetheless, the Kwara 2019 experience demonstrates that when effectively combined with offline strategies, social media can amplify mobilisation to unprecedented levels. Campaign teams that integrated online activities with physical voter engagement—such as door-to-door sensitisation, community meetings, and traditional media adverts—reported higher turnout rates in their strongholds. This hybrid mobilisation approach aligns with findings by Gainous and Wagner (2014), who argue that the most successful political campaigns in the digital era are those that strategically blend online and offline outreach. In the case of Kwara, social media did not merely broadcast political messages but fostered interactive political spaces that contributed to a heightened sense of civic duty among certain voter segments.

4.3 Social Media and Political Awareness

The findings indicate that social media played a pivotal role in shaping political awareness among voters in Kwara State during the 2019 gubernatorial election. Across age groups, respondents consistently described platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, and Twitter as their go-to channels for timely and detailed political information. Unlike traditional media, which often delivers one-way communication, these digital platforms allowed voters to access updates almost instantly, creating a sense of being directly connected to the electoral process. For instance, 68% of survey participants reported that they first learned about the dates of voter registration and Permanent Voter Card (PVC) collection through WhatsApp broadcasts or Facebook posts rather than through television or radio announcements.

A substantial proportion of respondents emphasised that social media was not just a tool for news consumption but also a means of deepening their understanding of political issues. Through infographics, short campaign videos, and interactive Q\&A sessions hosted on Facebook Live, voters were able to explore candidates' positions on pressing matters such as youth unemployment, infrastructural

development, and education reform. One young civil servant noted that "before the election, I followed several Facebook pages that broke down each candidate's plans for education, healthcare, and job creation. This helped me decide who to vote for." This demonstrates how visual and interactive content can serve as a form of civic education, empowering citizens to make informed choices.

The study further reveals that social media enabled political parties and candidates to bypass traditional media gatekeeping, presenting their messages unfiltered to the electorate. This direct-to-voter communication strategy allowed parties to craft narratives that resonated with specific voter demographics. For example, the Ó Tó Gé movement used Twitter hashtags and Facebook updates to continuously remind voters of perceived government failures and the need for political change. This aligns with Kruikemeier et al. (2013), who argue that sustained, targeted political content on social media can significantly enhance voters' political knowledge and engagement levels.

However, the research also highlights that the quality of political awareness generated online was not always uniform. While some voters became better informed, others were exposed to misleading or factually incorrect content.

Approximately 27% of respondents admitted to encountering political rumours or false claims on WhatsApp groups, which sometimes influenced their perception of candidates. This confirms the concerns of Tandoc, Lim, and Ling (2018), who warn that misinformation on digital platforms can distort political understanding, especially when fact-checking mechanisms are absent or underutilised.

Despite the challenges posed by misinformation, the general consensus among respondents was that social media significantly broadened their access to political knowledge. The platforms facilitated not only the distribution of information but also public discussion and debate, which reinforced awareness and critical thinking. For instance, political debates streamed on Facebook allowed viewers to post real-time reactions, ask follow-up questions, and share clips within their networks, thereby extending the conversation beyond the original broadcast. This two-way interaction contributed to a more informed electorate, demonstrating the transformative potential of social media in enhancing political consciousness in Kwara State.

4.4 Negative Aspects of Social Media Use in the 2019 Election

Although social media provided unprecedented opportunities for political participation and engagement during the 2019 gubernatorial election in Kwara State, it also presented several negative consequences that undermined the quality of democratic discourse. The most prominent challenge identified was the prevalence of misinformation and disinformation. Many respondents described encountering political rumours, fabricated stories, and misleading statistics that were deliberately crafted to sway public opinion. Approximately 31% of survey participants reported that they had shared political information online without verifying its authenticity, often because it came from trusted friends or family in WhatsApp groups. This confirms the observation of Allcott and Gentzkow (2017) that fake news has become an entrenched feature of modern political communication, particularly on social platforms where verification is minimal.

Respondents frequently pointed out that such falsehoods were not accidental but rather the product of coordinated political propaganda. Several participants noted instances where unverified claims about a candidate's personal life, financial records, or political history were circulated to damage reputations and polarise the

electorate. A market trader shared that "sometimes we would receive alarming news about a candidate, only to find out later it was false." In some cases, these false narratives spread rapidly, reaching thousands of users within hours due to the viral nature of social media. This strategic weaponisation of misinformation mirrors the patterns described by Wardle and Derakhshan (2017), where false content is systematically deployed to manipulate voter perception and erode trust in democratic institutions.

Another worrying trend identified in the findings was the rise of cyberbullying and online harassment during the election period. The anonymity and perceived lack of accountability on platforms like Facebook and Twitter enabled some users to engage in personal attacks, name-calling, and derogatory comments directed at political candidates and their supporters. In several focus group discussions, participants described instances of ethnic and religious stereotyping being used to mobilise or alienate particular voting blocs. This type of discourse not only deepened divisions within communities but also discouraged some individuals— especially women and young first-time voters—from actively participating in online political conversations.

The study also found that social media created echo chambers that amplified partisan biases. Respondents admitted to primarily following pages, groups, and influencers whose political leanings aligned with their own. This insular consumption of information reinforced pre-existing beliefs and left little room for critical engagement with alternative viewpoints. Such polarisation is consistent with Sunstein's (2018) assertion that algorithm-driven content delivery on social media can intensify ideological segregation, making it harder for citizens to engage in balanced political debate. In this context, political propaganda becomes even more effective because audiences are less likely to encounter fact-checks or dissenting perspectives.

These negative aspects raise important concerns about the adequacy of regulatory and institutional mechanisms for ensuring ethical political communication online. While the Nigerian Broadcasting Commission (NBC) and the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) have mandates to oversee certain aspects of campaign conduct, their reach into social media regulation remains limited. Participants in the study called for stricter monitoring of political content, the implementation of fact-checking systems, and harsher penalties for those who

deliberately spread false or harmful information. Such measures echo the recommendations of Okoro and Nwafor (2013), who argue that without strong governance structures, the darker side of social media will continue to threaten the integrity of elections in Nigeria.

CHAPTER FIVE
SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary

This study set out to assess the impacts of social media on electoral campaigns and voters' behaviour in Nigeria, with a particular focus on the 2019 Kwara State gubernatorial election. The research was driven by the recognition that platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and WhatsApp have become integral to political communication in contemporary society. These digital spaces now serve as primary arenas where candidates promote their agendas, political parties engage with supporters, and voters access campaign information. In the context of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, Nigeria's political communication landscape has undergone a marked transformation, shifting from largely one-directional methods such as rallies, posters, and radio broadcasts—to an interactive, technology-driven, and user-centred model that allows for greater immediacy and participation (Idemudia et al., 2021).

The choice of the 2019 Kwara State gubernatorial election as a case study was informed by its symbolic significance in Nigerian politics. The election was not only a test of political influence but also a landmark in the "O To Ge" ("Enough is

Enough") movement, which reflected the power of grassroots mobilisation amplified through digital media. By focusing on this event, the study was able to capture how social media intersected with local political realities to influence the trajectory of a high-stakes election. It also provided an opportunity to examine how digital tools interacted with pre-existing socio-political structures, including patronage networks, voter mobilisation strategies, and regional political identities. The research employed a mixed-methods design, combining quantitative and qualitative approaches to ensure a comprehensive analysis. Quantitative data were collected through survey questionnaires administered to registered voters in Kwara State, capturing their exposure to and interaction with political content online. Qualitative insights were gathered from in-depth interviews with political actors, campaign managers, media analysts, and civil society observers. This methodological combination provided a holistic perspective, enabling the study to assess both the scale of social media engagement and the nuances of how digital platforms were strategically utilised during the campaign. It also allowed for cross-validation of findings, enhancing the study's credibility and depth.

Findings revealed that social media played a dual role in the electoral process. On the positive side, it facilitated political mobilisation, expanded access to timely political information, and offered an open platform for issue-based campaigns. Candidates were able to communicate policy proposals directly to voters, bypassing traditional media gatekeepers. This interactivity fostered greater political awareness among the electorate, especially among urban youth, and provided opportunities for political debates that were more inclusive than those hosted by traditional media outlets. Importantly, the findings align with earlier studies that recognise social media as a democratising tool capable of reducing the communication gap between political leaders and citizens (Mutsvairo & Ragnedda, 2019).

On the negative side, social media emerged as a conduit for misinformation, cyber-propaganda, and divisive political rhetoric. Respondents recounted instances where fabricated news stories circulated widely, often aimed at discrediting opponents or fuelling ethnic and partisan divisions. The anonymity of these platforms also encouraged cyberbullying and the spread of hate speech, which in some cases escalated tensions within the political landscape. This

mirrors global concerns, as noted by Babalola and Olayinka (2020), that the same features which make social media attractive for open discourse also make it vulnerable to exploitation by actors seeking to manipulate public opinion. Such trends highlight the urgent need for stronger digital governance frameworks and media literacy initiatives to safeguard electoral integrity.

The research further demonstrated that voters' behaviour in Kwara State was significantly shaped by their exposure to political messages online. Younger voters, in particular, emerged as the most active demographic on social media, relying heavily on these platforms for campaign updates, political debates, and access to party manifestos. Their voting decisions were often influenced by the type, frequency, and framing of political content they encountered. This pattern aligns with global trends indicating that "digital natives" prefer online platforms over traditional media for political engagement (Loader et al., 2014). Overall, the findings underscore that while social media has expanded the democratic space, its influence is complex and requires careful management to ensure that it strengthens rather than undermines Nigeria's democratic process.

5.2 Conclusion

The 2019 Kwara State gubernatorial election clearly illustrates that social media has evolved into an indispensable instrument within Nigeria's political arena. Its ability to disseminate campaign messages rapidly, enable real-time interaction between candidates and citizens, and mobilise widespread political participation has transformed traditional campaign strategies. Digital platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp served not only as channels for information dissemination but also as spaces for debate, civic engagement, and political advocacy, reshaping how voters accessed and processed political information.

Nevertheless, the findings of this study reveal that the advantages of social media in enhancing democratic participation are counterbalanced by significant challenges to electoral integrity. The ease with which false information and propaganda can be produced and shared without verification creates fertile ground for voter manipulation. The absence of comprehensive regulatory frameworks and weak enforcement mechanisms allow malicious actors to exploit these platforms to spread divisive rhetoric, incite political hostility, and mislead the electorate.

This situation mirrors global concerns about the vulnerability of democratic processes in the digital age.

In light of these observations, the study concludes that safeguarding the democratic potential of social media requires a multifaceted approach. Policy interventions aimed at regulating online political communication, combined with robust voter education programmes, are essential in mitigating the risks of misinformation and manipulation. Promoting digital literacy would empower voters to critically evaluate online content, while collaboration between government agencies, civil society organisations, and technology companies could foster a more transparent and accountable online political space. Without such measures, the transformative benefits of social media in electoral processes may be overshadowed by its potential to distort democratic outcomes.

5.3 Recommendations

1. Institutional Regulation of Political Content Online

   The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) in collaboration with the Nigerian Broadcasting Commission (NBC) and telecommunication regulators should develop clear guidelines for political campaign activities on social media.

This will help curb the spread of fake news and unverified claims during election periods.

2. Capacity Building for Political Actors

Political parties and campaign managers should be trained in ethical and strategic use of social media. This will not only enhance their ability to run effective campaigns but also ensure adherence to democratic norms and civility in political communication.

3. Digital Literacy Programmes for Voters

The Ministry of Information and grassroots civil society organisations should launch targeted digital literacy campaigns to equip citizens with skills to verify information, identify propaganda, and critically evaluate political messages online.

4. Promotion of Issue-Based Campaigns

Candidates and parties should be encouraged to focus on policy-driven debates rather than personality attacks. Social media platforms can be leveraged to host virtual town halls, live Q\&A sessions, and policy briefings to deepen voter engagement.

5. Collaboration with Tech Companies

Nigerian electoral bodies should work closely with global tech firms such as Meta, X (formerly Twitter), and Google to flag, label, or remove harmful political content, especially during sensitive election periods.

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