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**Godswill John**  
Department of Mass  
Communication Cross River  
University of Technology,  
Calabar, Nigeria.

**Ibe, Ukam Ekuma**  
Department of Mass  
Communication Cross River  
University of Technology,  
Calabar, Nigeria.

**Correspondence**  
**Godswill John**  
Department of Mass  
Communication Cross River  
University of Technology,  
Calabar, Nigeria.

## Social media and political mobilization: A study of electorate's preparation for 2019 presidential election in cross river state

**Godswill John and Ibe, Ukam Ekuma**

### Abstract

This study on Social Media and Political Mobilization basically sought examine how electorates were mobilized through social media for the 2019 Presidential election in Cross River State. The study was guided by five objectives as well as five research questions. The study was anchored on Marshall McLuhan's Technological Determinism Theory which states that technology shapes how individuals in a society think, feel, act, and how the society operates. The theory further assumes that technology drives development in any given society. Survey methodology was adopted. Accordingly, a sample size of 384 was drawn from the study population of 227,255. The study utilized the closed-ended questionnaire and in-depth interview as instruments of data gathering. The major findings of the study showed that the social media, particularly, Facebook serves as the main channel of political mobilization in modern democratic society. The electorates relied on social media as the main source of information and the basis on which they formed their opinions and voting decision. Adequate mobilization and enlightenment of the people enabled them to participate fully in the political process. Further findings showed that social media had the potential of abuse by desperate actors in the political space. Based on the findings; the researcher recommended among other things that there should be increased use of social media in all the electioneering processes. Social media should also be deployed for other forms of mass mobilization rather than leaving it for political campaigns solely. Government should put in place well-articulated guidelines (regulatory framework) on how political parties should use the online media networks for electioneering campaigns and other political activities to stem the ugly tide of utilization of the platforms for selfish reasons.

**Keywords:** Social media, Election, Political mobilization, Electorates, Campaigns

### Introduction

Communication is at the center of all political activities. Macnamara, (2008) observes that the mass media have since emerged as the most common source of information about election campaign in democracies and societies in transition around the world. More so, the new technologies offer various platforms where information and other socio-political communication can be constructed and discussed. This has made the medium become a formidable one; the mobilizing structure of the social media and all resources necessary for popular mobilization, which in this case is contained in social media as the fastest and easiest means to mobilize (Stark, 2010).

Nwoye and Okafor (2014) <sup>[24]</sup> note that in Nigeria, the social media and other social networks are gaining currency in politics. This is so because amongst the political elite, the social networks provide unhindered communication with internet users anywhere, anytime almost simultaneously.

Social media applications enable people, not only to create but also share content and participate in social networking. They are computer mediated tools that enable users to create, share or exchange information, ideas, pictures and videos in virtual communities and networks. To Kaplan and Haenlein (2010, para. 8) <sup>[14]</sup> "social media are a group of internet based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of web 2.0 and that allow the creation and exchange of user generated content".

As noted by Kietzman and Hernkens (2011) <sup>[15]</sup> social networking platforms depend on mobile and web-based techniques to create highly interactive platforms through which individuals and communities share, co-create, discuss and modify user-generated content.

The information and communication technologies available for everyday communications of human have so contracted our world that the world has moved beyond a global village into a world family. Commenting on this view, Mojeed-Sanni (2015) <sup>[20]</sup> avers that through the social media, the world has moved from a global village to a global parlour, wherein from the corners of a large room, far reaching mobilization, decisions and annihilation are carried out re-vibration national and global consequences.

There are many social media platforms for communication and information sharing including facebook, twitter, 2go, whatsapp, myspace, youtube, google+ and Wikipedia to name a few. In Nigeria, Facebook, Twitter, Whatsapp, 2go, Youtube and Goggle+ are the most popular (Mojeed-Sanni, 2015) <sup>[20]</sup>. These social media platforms are utilized by different individuals and organizations for several purposes. Within the realm of political communication, political parties and candidates all over the world carry out their political activities through different forums and platforms. Modern media of communication (radio, magazine, newspaper and television) including political campaign rallies are mostly used to disseminate information to electorate as a way of swaying voting decision in their favour. The modern media have been in use for all types of political communication for a long time and have been adjudged effective in communicating political ideas, issues, candidates, manifesto, etc, to the intended audience. However, the advent of the social media has introduced a new dimension to political communication wherein electioneering campaigns and scouting for votes by political office-seekers and political parties are done by utilizing the vast opportunities provided by the social media not only to register their political interest and ambition but also persuasively appeal to be voted for.

Friedman, (2007) <sup>[12]</sup> believes that the political theatre for most successful electioneering campaigns in today's world is located in the social media and most electoral battles nowadays are fought and won through the social media. Indeed as Edegeh and Samson (2014) <sup>[10]</sup> note, "access to social media is easy and could be done anywhere, in one's office, home, while waiting in the car, in the comfort of people's bedroom etc, using smart phones, laptops and other forms of communication device at the disposal of people". With these devices, voters could access any candidate that is online and obtain the needed information about the candidate. In the 2019 general elections, Cross Riverians witnessed so many political parties participating in what has been adjudged as a free and fair election. However, two political parties, the People's Democratic Party (PDP) and the All Progressive Congress (APC) were and are still the leading political parties in Nigeria in terms of national outlook, availability of party members occupying elective offices in the land, such as the senators, members of the house of representative, state governors etc. These two political parties went into the 2019 elections as the super parties, while all other political parties in the country were seen as underdogs.

The extent of the utilization of social media in the 2019 electioneering campaigns by the PDP and APC forms the

thrust of this study.

This study examines ways in which social media was used to mobilize people in Cross River State to further promote free and fair elections, and to consolidate the gains of democracy in the state and other elections.

### Focus of the Inquiry

The development and ubiquity of social media as a tool for simultaneous connection among people globally has given way for new means of mobilizing citizens towards a particular cause, a situation which makes experts to believe that the use of social media could lead to a more democratic functioning of the society.

Ibrahim and Ibeanu (2009) <sup>[13]</sup> believe that successive elections in Nigeria have been trailed by lots of irregularities such as disenfranchisement of prospective voters, ballot box snatching and stuffing, intimidation of political opponents, as well as allegations of collusion between election officials and politicians to alter election results and subvert popular mandate.

The flaws that characterized the conduct of the past elections in Nigeria had severely dented the integrity of the electoral process and triggered demands from all stakeholders for a more free, fair and credible elections. The traditional media which (TV, radio and print) have been accused of not living up to expectations in terms of making genuine information available to the electorate before, during, and even after elections. One major reason for this is the fact that most of these traditional media are owned and controlled by the political elite in Nigeria, thus, the need for a shift to a more interactive and less stringently – controlled media that allows for user-to-user generated contents, eliminating ownership influence that has constituted the bane of the traditional media.

Thus this study attempts to provide evidence of the application and utilization of social media, particularly Facebook, by politicians and political parties in the mobilization of voters towards the 2019 presidential elections in Cross River State.

### Objectives of the Study

Specifically, the objectives of this research work were as follows:

- i. To find out the level of political awareness created on the social media among electorates in Cross River State prior to the 2019 general elections.
- ii. To find out which social media platform was mostly used for the 2019 general elections.
- iii. To find out the extent to which social media can influence voters' behaviour prior to the 2019 general elections.
- iv. To ascertain the effectiveness of social media as tools of political mobilization for the 2019 general elections.
- v. To ascertain the challenges inherent in the use of social media for political mobilization in elections.

### Research Questions

In line with the objectives raised, the following questions guided the study.

- i. What is the level of political awareness created on social media among electorates prior to the 2019 presidential elections in Cross River State?
- ii. Which social media platform was mostly used prior to the 2019 presidential elections?

- iii. How did social media influence voters' behaviour in Nigeria prior to 2019 general elections?
- iv. How effective was social media used as tools for political mobilization in 2019 presidential elections?
- v. What challenges are inherent in the use of social media for political mobilization during elections?

### Conceptual and theoretical review

#### The Concept of social media

Social media are those Internet-based tools and services that allow users to engage with each other, generate content, distribute, and search for information online. In other words, the social media are interactive web-based media platforms that offer citizens opportunity and place to connect, share opinions, experiences, views, contacts, knowledge, expertise, etc. They belong to a new genre of media that focuses on social networking allowing users to express themselves, interact with friends and share information with greater freedom as well as publish their views on issues on the World Wide Web. It is this interactive or collaborative nature of these tools that makes them social (Chatora, 2012) <sup>[6]</sup>.

Mayfield (2008, p.44) describes these media as "online platforms that promote participation, openness, conversation and connectedness". Adibe, Odoemelam and Orji (2012), they are online content, created by people using highly accessible and scalable publishing technologies to disseminate information across geographical boundaries, providing interaction among people. They support democratization of knowledge and information, thereby making the people both information producers and consumers.

Social media emerged with the advent of the internet and the World Wide Web. They are usually associated with the term "web 2.0" which is used to describe websites that provide opportunity for a user to interact with the sender of a message. Nwabueze (2012) <sup>[23]</sup> observes that "Web 2.0" refers to the state of the web from 2004 till date, a period when interactive websites emerged as opposed to "web 1.0" which describes the state of the web prior to 2004. Web-based communities, social networking sites video-sharing, sites, Wikis, and blogs, are among examples of web 2.0 sites (Allen, Ekwugha & Chukwulete, 2011).

The social media provide means for users to interact over the internet, most times through the use of email and instant messaging. Social networking sites allow users to share ideas, activities, events, and interests within their individual networks (Okunna & Omenugha, 2012) <sup>[25]</sup>.

Indeed, as McQuail (2005) observes the transformation in the technology of information and communication generation, processing, storage and dissemination witnessed in the 21st century unprecedentedly opened up new media platforms unmatched in history in terms of interconnectedness, interactivity, multiplicity and accessibility.

Gevertz and Greenwood (2010) conceptualized social media as information that is disseminated through highly accessible publishing techniques (web and mobile) that transform people from content consumers into content producers. Social media is a change from a unidirectional model of communication to a multidirectional model of communication, where audience members are actively engaged in the communication and are not just receivers of information (Thackeray & Neiger, 2009).

According to Spurgeon (2008), social media are considered the most interactive of all communication media, because it is engineered to support all modes of interpersonal, mass and computer-mediated communication. Spurgeon further notes that interactivity is a major criterion of comparison between "old" mass media and "new" digitally networked media and the more interactive a communication system is, the more flexible the system is in terms of the types of communication and exchange such a system can support.

Typical examples of social media platforms include websites such as Facebook, Twitter, Flickr, YouTube and the interactive options on these websites, such as the "retweeting" option on Twitter. These instruments are referred to as media because they are tools which can also be used for the storage and dissemination of information, however unlike the traditional media, most of the social media tools allow their users to interact as "re-tweeting" as it is on Twitter and "comment" as the options on Facebook.

Social media introduced speed and interactivity that were lacking in the traditional mobilization techniques, which generally included the use of leaflets, posters, and faxes" (Eltantawy & Wiest, 2011) <sup>[11]</sup>. Perhaps one of the most striking features of this new method of communication is its ability to bypass the bias of official sources and the mass media and give a voice to ordinary citizens in transforming the political landscape of their country. Buttressing the aforesaid, Downey and Fenton (2003, p.12) note; "This is an argument for information abundance freed from the shackles of a mass communication system that broadcast from one to many".

Another attribute of the social media which distinguishes it from the traditional media is that it allows its users "free choice". Choice enables people to access the information they like to learn about through the social media, eliminating the gatekeeper role of traditional media.

#### The Concept of Election

An election is usually brought about when people, in order to fill a position, collectively and voluntarily put their consent for the choice of a candidate through voting. Through voting, the candidate with the highest vote gets elected. Elections are primarily mechanism for selecting certain governmental leaders, as well as removing leaders from office, and preventing others from gaining office through democratic means. In some countries, election brings about stability and instability. At the most abstract level, elections are mechanisms capable of translating the popular will into institutionally defined roles. At the concrete level, elections are about the choice of individuals. The word election derives from a Latin word "eligere", meaning to pick out, to choose. Election constitutes the major process for instituting governments and for holding public officials accountable for their actions and keeping them responsive to the people's needs and interests in democracies. From the foregoing, it can be argued that one of the fundamental mainstays of good and democratic governance is free and fair election.

Fundamentally, elections are important in the life of a people; they provide an opportunity within a certain clear limits for the people to choose their political leaders. This means that elections reflect the choice of electorates and the will of the people; given that the result is to ensure that only the true representatives of the people hold the reins of governmental powers (Okwudiba, 2003) <sup>[26]</sup>.

Elections allow citizens to exercise their civic and constitutional rights to elect or appoint their representatives and confer legitimacy on those who are responsible to rule or govern them in a democratic society. The representatives could be endowed with the executive or legislative powers by the electorates. Qualified citizens in a democratic society possess legal rights to vote for politicians and the political party of their choice through free, fair and credible election based on their coherently articulated policies.

Elections take different forms in different societies. The form that they take and the precise role that they play vary enormously from place to place and over time. However it takes, elections serve primarily as instruments of mass mobilization and legitimization for the government (Okwudiba, 2003) <sup>[26]</sup>.

### **Mass Mobilization**

Mass mobilization is borne out of the need to organize people into groups to ensure their involvement and participation in development programmes. Available literature shows that mass mobilization's goal is the provision of a continuum of activities in a broad strategic framework to facilitate change. The process encompasses dialogue and partnership with a wide spectrum of societal elements with an outcome which are people's active involvement in the process starting with identifying a need to implementation, and achieving the development objective and evaluation effort.

There are different parts to mass mobilization such as: the motivation and organization of different groups that results in the successful transformation of development goals into societal action; involving the people in taking part actively and freely in discussions and decisions affecting their general welfare; a process that engages and motivates a wide range of partners and allies at national and local levels to raise awareness of and demand for a particular development objective through face- to-face dialogue.

In all these efforts, mass mobilization process ensures that, members of institutions, community networks, civic and religious groups and others work in a coordinated way to reach specific groups of people for dialogue with planned messages. In other words, social mobilization seeks to facilitate change through a range of players engaged in interrelated and complementary efforts.

In fact, mass mobilization aims at increasing people's level of awareness or cognition of political and other issues so that they can apply their energies positively and participate actively in the social and political life of the country. In the present political dispensation, mass mobilization now occurs most frequently through these three main social media; the Facebook, text messages and twitter. In fact it seems as if the traditional media primarily responsible for calling people into action for meeting and other social activities have been overtaken by the social media especially block text messages, Facebooks and emails (Dunu, & Uzochukwu, 2015) <sup>[9]</sup>.

From the above explanations, mass mobilization could be defined simply as a means of inspiring people to active action and engagement concerning social issues. The key for mobilization is to inspire and motivate individuals to go from the comfort of their homes to engage in development actions. The development of the internet has provided an alternative means for mobilizing the public. Social media allow organizers such as professionals, civil society and

government who are recognized as key agents of social mobilization to involve like-minded people in a particular desirable activity at a very low cost, to action. Instead of attending meetings, workshops and rallies, un-committed individuals can join a Facebook group or follow a Twitter feed at home (Dunu & Uzochukwu, 2015) <sup>[9]</sup>.

### **Social Media and Political Mobilization**

Social media outlets are essential to politicians and political parties, enabling them to gain support, encourage participation and have an open and continuous dialogue. Most importantly social media allows the highly motivated people to create a context more easily in which the barely motivated people can be effective without having to become activists themselves, creating an environment perfect for politicians to utilize. The emerging social media and its public and political influence have begun to transform the political process and campaign tactics. Politicians are now using social media and the Internet and in turn are permitting a new arena of grassroots politics (Narasimhamurthy, 2014) <sup>[21]</sup>.

Political mobilization has been a key concept in political and social discourse ring in mind that it is quite central to political participation and social engineering. According to Nwoye (2009) political mobilization is a process of initiating citizens into a desired political action by focusing on their greatest political needs and expectations. Political mobilization is a group activity designed to raise political awareness and consciousness in a desired political direction (Winkler, 2011).

Political mobilization is an action and goal- oriented behaviour geared towards a particular direction. It is therefore crucial to all forms of political activity that seeks to achieve a definite goal or in pursuit of ideology-driven course of purpose. This is why it is extremely useful as a tool for social and political change (Nwoye, & Okafor, 2014) <sup>[24]</sup>.

Enjolras, Johnsen and Wollebaek (2011) explain that political mobilization refers to "the process by which candidates, parties, activists, and groups induce other people to participate" in politics "to win elections, to pass bills, to modify rulings, and to influence policies". Political organizations may contact people and provide a specific "opportunity for political action" In most instances; mobilization is a key prerequisite before any participation can occur.

From the foregoing we can take political mobilization to mean the process of sensitizing the citizenry, increasing their cognition, political consciousness as well as the latter's efficacy. In other words, political mobilization could be taken, to means the determined process of emotionally bringing people together and making them to internalize communality of societal values, attitudes and orientation in achieving particularistic and specified holistic objective (Akindele, 2004) <sup>[3]</sup>.

Social media may be viewed both as technology and space for expanding and sustaining the networks upon, which social movements depend. The Arab revolts exemplify how online social networks facilitated by social media have become a key ingredient of contemporary populist movements. Social media are not simply neutral tools to be used or adopted by social movements, but rather influence how activists form and shape the social movements (Lim, 2012) <sup>[16]</sup>.

The social media have been used to bolster democracies around the world, especially in mobilizing people for political actions. For example, US President Barack Obama ran a widely popular election campaign in 2008 that employed social media to good effect. In the U.S., the 2008 election of Barack Obama as President reflected unprecedented use of social media in a political campaign. The Obama campaign served as a stunning demonstration of a skilled team's use of widely available tools. The Obama campaign participated actively in more than 15 social networks and had 5 million active supporters through these media (Michael & Ajakaiye, 2012) <sup>[19]</sup>.

### **Social Media Use in Nigerian Elections: Evidence from Empirical Studies**

Michael Aleyomi and Olanrewaju Ajakaiye (2012) <sup>[19]</sup> through their study found out that INEC used the social media platforms to respond to more than 4000 queries in 2011 elections, and the active involvement and interactivity that ensued between politicians, political parties and other groups during the 2011 election. The study revealed that by December 2010, Goodluck Jonathan had already won more than 300,000 fans on his Facebook page.

The 2011 general elections witnessed a remarkable use of social media as a political communication tool in Nigeria. The role of the social media in political mobilization and participation across the globe cannot be overemphasized. They further stated that, the 2011 elections demonstrated the extent to which the social media have penetrated the urban, populace in Nigeria. The benefits of the penetration of social media in Nigeria came to light during the 2011 elections. Nigerian citizens of all ages, education levels and from different parts of the country used and were mobilized through the use of social media to participate in the 2011 general elections.

Furthermore, Michael and Olanrewaju's research confirmed the heavy use of social networking sites like: Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, BBM, YouTube, and others in the 2011 election; the results revealed that Facebook and Twitter were heavily used to mobilize the people. Related study that supports this claim is; Okoro's study in 2013 (*social media and political participation in Nigeria during the 2011 general elections: the lapses and the lessons*). The study argues that the four key stakeholders in the Nigerian electoral process (the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), politicians/political parties, the electorate, and Civil Society Organizations) made extensive use of social media during the 2011 elections. Each of these stakeholders used the social media to achieve a number of interrelated objectives.

INEC used social media basically to broadcast messages on the elections and receive feedbacks from the public on their experience with the process. Politicians/political parties used the social media to reach out to the voters and canvass for support. The electorates used social media to report, their experiences and receive election related information, while the CSOs used the social media to mobilize and educate the electorate as well as to cover and report their observation of the electoral process.

Shirky (2011) asserts that "one of the most revolutionary aspects of the use of social media in mobilizing is that it trivializes the need for elite support. Through the use of social media, individuals are able to connect with each other and organize at an incredible low cost.

Indeed, social media have emerged as the new influencer in social, economic and political settings. Research *has* shown that increasing use of social media for political communication has led to declining newspaper readership and television viewership in many countries (Australian Media and Communication Authority 2007). The research findings of Bartlett, Krasodomski-Jones, Daniel, Fisher, and Jespersion (2015) who used a unique data gathering software to gather more than 13,6 million tweets over the period 18 March - 22 April 2015, tweets posted by 1.38 million unique users associated with the Nigerian Presidential and State elections held in March -April 2015. Also, they identified 15 news pages which were Facebook pages of popular official news websites. These produced 28,767 posts and received a total of 3,818,580 likes, 1,593,938 comments and 1,224,187 shares.

Under these circumstances, the social media may likely continue to dominate political communication, and to serve as a tool for gathering and disseminating political messages. Edegoh and Asemah (2014) conducted a study titled Social media use among students of private universities in Anambra State, Nigeria in which they surveyed 600 students using the questionnaire to find out the most frequently visited social medium by students, among others. Finding of their study revealed that the most visited social medium by students of privately owned universities in Anambra State is Facebook {291(50%)}

Edegoh and Asemah (2014) also reported that other social media used by the students they investigated include Wikipedia (150(26%)), YouTube (53(9%)), Twitter {35(6%)}, and Myspace {41(7%)}

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study is anchored on the Technological Determinism theory.

Technological Determinism theory was propounded in 1962 by Marshall McLuhan. Technological Determinism states that media technology shapes how we as individuals in a society think, feel, act, and how the society operates as we move from one technological age to another. This theory states that technology can transform any environment, and in a communication sense, media technology can be both a channel and a message at a time since technological innovations can imbibe development through the diffusion of the message it carries.

This theory applies to the study in the sense that, the dominant technology like the social media detects how the society reacts to messages from it. How the society operates as we move from one technological age to another and as much as they (audience) diffuses media messages. Unequivocally, there is a simple cause effect analysis between the introduction of new technology and the changes in society's way of thinking, feeling, acting or believing.

### **Methodology**

The study used the survey method of social scientific investigation to elicit the opinion of voters in Cross River State on social media use for the 2019 electioneering campaigns by the two leading political parties in Nigeria.

The study area is Calabar metropolis. It is an ancient city, reportedly the first capital of Nigeria. It is made up of two local government areas namely; Calabar Municipal and Calabar South. There are three major ethnic groups: Efik, Efut, and Qua.

As a capital city, Calabar metropolis accommodates people from all walks of life. However, residents of this town are predominantly by civil servants, traders and political office. Apart from the English language that is considered as the *Lingua Franca*, the natives of this city speak “Efik” and “Ejagam” as their ancestral language. The town shares boundary with Odukpani and Akpabuyo Local Government Area as well as Oron Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State.

**Sample and Sample Size**

A sample size of 200 respondents was drawn from the population of 245,500 according to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) data. Purposive sampling technique was adopted and found suitable for this study. This is because this technique allows the researcher the opportunity to identify respondents who have connection with the subject matter of the research and are qualified to respond on the issue. The researcher selected 200 respondents by identifying five (5) busiest places in Calabar, which are: 8 Miles, Etta Agbo, Marian Road, Ekpo Abasi and Watt Market from where the samples were drawn. The instrument for data collection for this study was a structured questionnaire. This was used to ascertain respondents’ perception on the use of social media for political mobilization during the 2019 general elections in Cross River State.

**Analysis and discussion of findings**

**Distribution of respondents of gender**

Gender	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Male	92	42%
Female	108	58%
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2019

The table 4.1 shows that 92 respondents, 42% males while 108 respondents, representing 58% were females. Therefore, the number of female respondents was more than the number of male respondents.

**Distributions of respondents by age**

Age	Number of Respondents	Percentage
15-30	55	27.5%
31-35	66	33%
36-40	31	15.5%
41-45	26	13%
46 and above	22	11%
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2019

From the age distribution in table 4.2 above, 55 respondents, representing 27.5% were within the age brackets of 15-25, 66 respondents, representing 33% were within 31-35 age bracket, 31 respondents, representing 15.5% were within 36-40 age brackets, 26 respondents, representing 13% were within 41-45 age brackets, while 22 respondents, representing 11% were within 46 and above.

**Distributions of respondents by educational qualification**

From the educational qualification distribution table 4.3 above, 62 respondents, representing 31% have O’level educational qualifications, while 82 respondents,

representing 41% have OND/HND educational qualifications, while 56 respondents, representing 28% have B.Sc/M.Sc educational qualifications.

Qualification	Number of Respondents	Percentage
O’Level	62	31%
OND/HND	82	41%
B.Sc/M.Sc	56	28%
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2019

**Distributions of Respondents by Marital Status**

Marital Status	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Married	105	52.5%
Single	85	42.5%
Divorce	10	5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2019

From the marital status distribution table 4.4 above, 105 respondents, representing 52.5% were married, 85 respondents, representing 42.5% were single 10 respondents, representing 5% were divorced. Therefore, the numbers of respondents that are married are more than the number of respondents that are single.

**Distributions of respondents by Occupation**

Occupation	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Students	56	28%
Civil Servants	68	34%
Traders	53	26.5%
Farmers	23	11.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2019

From the distribution of table 4.5 above, 56 respondents, representing 28% are students, 68 respondents, representing 34% are civil servants, 53 respondents, representing 26.5% are traders, whereas 23 respondents, representing 11.5% are farmers.

**Distributions of Respondents showing the extent to which the social media can be utilized by political parties prior to the 2019 general elections in C.R.S**

Responses/Options	Number of Respondents	Percentage
To a very high extent	109	54.5%
High extent	68	34%
Low extent	20	10%
Very low extent	3	1.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2019

From the distribution in table 4.6 above, 109 respondents, representing 54.5% were of the opinion that social media can be used to a very extent by political parties in the 2019 general elections in Cross River State, 68 respondents, representing 34% can go for high extent, 20 respondents, representing 10% said it can be utilized in a low extent, whereas 3 respondents, representing 1.5% can go for very low extent.

**Distributions of Respondents showing the extent to which the social media can be utilized by candidates for**

**different electoral offices prior to the 2019 general elections in Calabar metropolis**

Responses/Options	Number of Respondents	Percentage
To a very high extent	120	60%
High extent	40	20%
Low extent	20	10%
Very low extent	20	10%
Total	200	100

Source: Field Survey, 2019

From the distribution in table 4.7 above, 120 respondents, representing 60% were of the opinion that candidates for different electoral offices can use the social media to a very extent in their political mobilization prior to the 2019 general elections in Calabar metropolis, 40 respondents, representing 20% went for high extent, 20 respondents, representing 10% said can be utilized in a low extent, whereas 20 respondents, representing 10% went for very low extent.

**Distributions of Respondents showing whether PDP and APC candidates can make use of the social media more than the candidates of other political parties prior to the 2019 general elections in Calabar metropolis**

Responses/Options	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	120	60%
No	80	40%
Total	200	100

Source: Field Survey, 2019

From the distribution in table 4.8 above, 120 respondents, representing 60% selected 'yes' that candidates of the two leading political parties (PDP and APC) will use the social media more than candidates of other political parties prior to the 2019 general elections in Calabar metropolis, while 80 respondents, representing 20% said no.

**Distributions of Respondents showing what social media platforms do to the leading political parties and their candidates will prior to the 2019 general elections in Calabar metropolis**

Responses/Options	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Facebook	111	55.5%
Twitter	79	39.5%
Whatsapp	10	5%
Others	0	0%
Total	200	100

Source: Field Survey, 2019

From the distribution in table 4.9 above, 111 respondents, representing 55.5% were of the opinion that candidates and political parties can use Facebook, mostly their political mobilization prior to the 2019 general elections in Calabar metropolis 79 respondents, representing 39.5% will use Twitter, 10 respondents, representing 5% will use Whatsapp, 0 respondents, representing 0% will use other social media.

**Distributions of Respondents showing the level of confidence for the messages that can be supply by the political parties on social media prior to the 2019 general elections in Calabar metropolis**

From the distribution in table 4.10 above, 18 respondents, representing 9% were of the opinion that they are to a very high extent that they had confidence in the messages supply by political parties through the social media prior to the 2019 general elections in Calabar metropolis, 119 respondents, representing 59.5% had high extent, 31 respondents, representing 15.5% said they have confidence to a low extent whereas 32 respondents, representing 16% had for very low extent.

Responses/Options	Number of Respondents	Percentage
To a very high extent	18	9%
High extent	119	59.5%
Low extent	31	15.5%
Very low extent	32	16%
Total	200	100

Source: Field Survey, 2019

**Distributions of Respondents showing the extent of political awareness that can be created on the social media among electorates prior to the 2019 general elections in Calabar metropolis**

Responses/Options	Number of Respondents	Percentage
To a very high extent	128	64%
High extent	62	31%
Low extent	10	5%
Very low extent	0	0%
Total	200	100

Source: Field Survey, 2019

From the distribution in table 4.11 above, 128 respondents, representing 64% were of the opinion that they have been in a very high extent of political awareness created on the social media among Nigerian electorates prior to the 2019 general elections in Calabar metropolis, 62 respondents, representing 31% had a high extent, while 10 respondents, representing 5% had low extent whereas none, 0 respondents, representing 0% had a very low extent.

**Distributions of Respondents showing the extent to which the social media can influence voters' behaviour prior to the 2019 general elections in Calabar metropolis**

Responses/Options	Number of Respondents	Percentage
To a very high extent	120	60%
High extent	70	35%
Low extent	10	5%
Very low extent	0	0%
Total	200	100

Source: Field Survey, 2019

From the distribution in table 4.12 above, 120 respondents, representing 60% were of the opinion of a very high extent that the social media can influence voters' behavior in Nigeria prior to the 2019 general elections in Calabar metropolis, 70 respondents, representing 35% had a high extent, while 10 respondents, representing 5% had low extent. Meanwhile, 0 respondents, representing 0% had a very low extent.

**Distributions of Respondents showing the extent to which the social media can be effective as tools for voters' mobilization in the 2019 general elections in Calabar metropolis**

Responses/Options	Number of Respondents	Percentage
To a very high extent	120	60%
High extent	70	35%
Low extent	10	5%
Very low extent	0	0%
Total	200	100

Source: Field Survey, 2019

From the distribution in table 4.13 above, 120 respondents, representing 60% were of the opinion that on the extent to which the social media can be effective as a tool for voter’s mobilization prior to the 2019 general elections in Calabar metropolis, 70 respondents, representing 35% were of high extent, while 10 respondents, representing 5% had low extent. Meanwhile, 0 respondents, representing 0% said it is to low extent.

**Distributions of Respondents showing the major basic challenges in the use of social media for voters’ mobilization prior to the 2019 general elections in Calabar metropolis**

Responses/Options	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Poor internet browsing network	41	20.5%
Lack of internet enabled device	79	39.5%
Lack of electricity to charge device	36	18%
Lack of internet subscription	44	22%
Others	0	0%
Total	200	100

Source: Field Survey, 2019

From the distribution in table 4.14 above, 41 respondents, representing 20.5% were of the opinion that poor internet browsing network is the major challenge in the use of social media influence as tools for voters’ mobilization prior to the 2019 general elections in Calabar metropolis, 79 respondents, representing 39.5% is lack of internet enabled device, 36 respondents, representing 18% said is lack of electricity to charge device, 44 respondents, representing 22% said is lack of internet subscription, meanwhile 0 respondents, representing 0% had it in a very low extent.

**Discussion of findings**

The discussion of finding is presented through the answering of the research questions. They are as follows; Answer to research question one: What is the level of political awareness created on the social media among Nigerian electorates prior to the 2019 general elections? Data from table 4.11 shows that, 128 respondents, representing 64% were of the opinion that they have been in a very high extent of political awareness created on the social media among Nigerian electorates prior to the 2019 general elections in Calabar metropolis, 62 respondents, representing 31% had a high extent, while 10 respondents, representing 5% had low extent. Meanwhile, 4 respondents, representing 4% had a very low extent. This means that the social media have really helped in creating political awareness in Calabar metropolis prior to the 2019 elections.

**Which social media platform did people mostly use prior to the 2019 general elections?**

Data from table 4.9 shows that a total of 111 respondents, representing 55.5% were of the opinion that candidates and

political parties made use of Facebook, mostly their political mobilization prior to the 2019 general elections in Calabar metropolis, 79 respondents, representing 39.5% will use Twitter, 10 respondents, representing 5% will use Whatsapp. This means that most political parties and candidates had relied and can mostly use the Facebook social media platforms prior to the 2019 general elections in Calabar metropolis.

**4.2.3 Answer to research question three: To what extent can the social media influence voters’ behavior in Nigeria prior to the 2019 general elections?**

Data from table 4.12 shows that 120 respondents, representing 60% were of the opinion of a very high extent that the social media can influence voters’ behavior in Nigeria prior to the 2019 general elections in Calabar metropolis, 30 respondents, representing 35% had a high extent, while 10 respondents, representing 10% had low extent. Meanwhile, 2 respondents, representing 2% had a very low extent. This means that the social media can really influence voters’ behavior prior to the 2019 general elections in Calabar metropolis.

**4.2.4 Answer to research question four: How effective can the social media be as tools for political mobilization in 2019 general elections?**

Data from table 4.13 above shows that a total of 120 respondents, representing 60% were of the opinion that on the extent to which the social media can be effective as a tool for voters’ mobilization prior to the 2019 general elections in Calabar metropolis, 70 respondents, representing 35% were of high extent, while 10 respondents, representing 5% had low extent. Meanwhile, 5 respondents, representing 5% said it is to low extent. This shows that the social media can be effective tools for political mobilization.

**4.2.5 Answer to research question five: What are the basic challenges in the use of social media for political mobilization prior to the 2019 general election in Calabar metropolis?**

Data from table 4.14 shows that 41 respondents, representing 20.5% were of the opinion that poor internet browsing network is the major challenge in the use of social media influence as tools for voters’ mobilization prior to the 2019 general elections in Calabar metropolis, 79 respondents, representing 39.5% is lack of internet enabled device, 36 respondents, representing 18% said lack of electricity to charge device, 22 respondents, representing 22% said is lack of internet subscription. Meanwhile, 10 respondents, representing 10% had it in a very low extent. Data from this study reveals that lack of internet enabled devices ranks top of the challenges facing the use of social media in political mobilization prior to the 2019 general elections.

**Summary**

This study was carried out to examine the used of social media as tools for political mobilization prior to the 2019 general elections in Calabar metropolis. The major objective of the study was to determine the effectiveness of the use of social media as tools for political mobilization prior to the 2019 general elections in Calabar metropolis. Related literature was extensively reviewed in chapter two. The study adopted the technology determinism theory as it



theoretical framework to drive the study. Survey research design was found to be appropriate for the study and data were obtained using structured questionnaires, while simple percentages were employed to analyze the data generated for the study.

Findings revealed that social media was heavily relied upon in the political mobilization of voters prior to the 2019 general elections. It was concluded that the use of social media in the electioneering process was found effective. Several recommendations were also made.

### Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it is concluded that the social media platforms were heavily relied upon to create political awareness among the electorates prior to the 2019 general elections. It was discovered from this study that Facebook, Twitter and Whatsapp social platform was mostly used as such had more traffic in the dissemination of messages by political parties and their candidates prior to the election.

The utilization of social media platform can be proved effectively in the 2019 general elections in Nigeria as such, it can really help to increase voters' consciousness and also help in shaping the electioneering process in Nigeria. Though not without some inherent challenges like lack of adequate internet access due to poor internet infrastructures and lack of internet-enabled devices.

### Recommendations

Based on the conclusion of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. There should be increased use of social media in all the electioneering processes, rather than leaving social media use for political campaign and other activities solely to contenting candidates.
2. Candidates of other political parties and indeed, all political office-seekers should make good use of the opportunities made available by social media networking sites in canvassing for votes and other electioneering activities.
3. Political institutions and parties should avoid unsubstantiated accusations intended to embarrass other political parties, their candidates or the electorate empire as such accusations, most times, confuse electorates.
4. Government/INEC should put in place well-articulated guidelines (regulatory framework) on how political parties should use the online media networks for electioneering campaigns and other political activities to stem the ugly tide of utilization of the platforms for selfish reasons.

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