



Research Paper

Social Media as a Tool for Political Marketing in Nigeria: Challenges and Opportunities

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Abstract

Gone are the days when social media were glibly esteemed as inferior imitations of mainstream media. Gone are the days when social media were regarded merely as innovative daises for gossips and informal socialization, appealing only to the millennials and the generations after them. Today, social media have become survival-critical media of the people, by the people and for the people, adopted for use in a plurality of domains. This paper examines social media as a tool for political marketing in Nigeria. Hinged on the Technological Determinism Theory and the Three-stage Model of Political Marketing, the paper provides a contextual appraisal of the utilization of social media technologies within the Nigerian political marketing ecosystem vis-à-vis, the challenges and opportunities. The study employed an explanatory and descriptive design, with significant reliance on library review. It discusses and exclusively establishes eleven ways by which social media are and can be utilized for political marketing, highlighting the peculiar challenges and opportunities which come with social media use for political marketing in Nigeria. It concludes that, there is a nexus between adoption of social media for political marketing and the support, endorsement and/or patronage an aspirant, candidate or political party receives before, during and after an election. The paper ends with five germane recommendations, aimed at addressing the challenges identified in the course of the study.

Keywords: Social Media, Marketing, Political Marketing, Mediamorphosis

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I. Introduction

The notion of political marketing is relatively a new kid on the block. It debuted as a child of necessity, an offspring of circumstance, an innovative offshoot from its parent concept of marketing. The idea, according to scholars like Kotler and Zaltman (1971), Kotler (1972), Hunt (1976), Levy (2002) all in Gbadeyan (2011), originated in the 1970s, with the debate on broadening what constitutes marketing. Marketing had since expanded in scope and span beyond the perfunctory activity of exchange of goods and services. Marketing now emblemizes the activity, set of institutions and processes for creating, communicating, delivering and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners and society at large (American Marketing Association, 2017).

While scholars offer sundry definitions of political marketing, there seems to be a consensus that presents political marketing as the application of marketing principles to politics. Political marketing seems to connote a marriage of some sort between marketing and politics. Political marketing involves the application of marketing principles and procedures in political campaigns by various individuals and organizations (Newman, 1999 in Mohamed & Ogwuche, 2021).

Just like marketing is much broader than advertising, political marketing is much broader than political advertising. While political advertising relates specifically to promotional efforts designed to create awareness of and attract political patronage to an aspirant, a candidate, politician or political party, political marketing involves a set of processes and activities for creating, communicating, delivering and exchanging a political commodity of value. It involves getting understanding of the demands of the electorate and creating solutions to satisfy such demands. It concerns the positioning of politicians and their parties in the marketplace of politics to seek electorate's support (votes) in order to win an election.

Political Marketing can simply be conceptualized as an exchange of value. Gbadeyan (2011), citing O'Class (1996), explained that, when voters cast votes, there is a transaction taking place. The party in return for the votes, offer better government and policies after elections. The various means through which an aspirant or candidate or political party seeks the voters' support constitute political marketing.

In Nigeria, the media have always been potent instruments of sensitization and mobilization of people towards politics. In pre-independence Nigeria, the press was a major vehicle for political mobilization, with leading figures like Herbert Macaulay, Nnamdi Azikiwe, Ernest Ikoli, Obafemi Awolowo, Anthony Enahoro, Dutse Mohammed Ali, also serving as publishers, editors, journalists and commentators, and using their media platforms to spread nationalistic awareness and oppose colonial subjugation. Even during military dictatorship, the media were significantly deployed by veterans like Dele Giwa, Ray Ekpu, Dan Agbese, Yakubu Mohammed and a host of others, for political communication. This deployment of media forms and channels for political communication, political advertising or political marketing has significantly increased in the last two decades, with escalated use of new media forms such as social media.

Social media, according to Nnah (2016) in Umoh (2017), are means of interactions among people in which they create, share, exchange and comment on contents among themselves in virtual communities and networks. Bassey (2020) describes them as interactive computer-mediated technologies that facilitate the creation and sharing of information, ideas, career interests and other forms of expressions via virtual communities and networks. They are internet-based social communication platforms which promote participation, openness, conversation and connectedness within the context of virtual reality. Prominent examples of social media utilized in Nigeria include Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Wikipedia, TikTok, Pinterest, Instagram, etc.

Commenting on the significance of social media in politics, political communication and political marketing, London (Prsync, 2010) in Chinedu-Okeke and Obi (2016, p.2), noted:

Politics is not a spectator sport, and now people have more and easier ways to get involved. Nigerian voters have the opportunity to participate and potentially help design a new conversation at the political level, something that has allowed people to go back to building communities on a much larger scale, making the world smaller in the process for many.

The assertion above recognizes the place of social media in politics and political marketing in Nigeria. In time past, only conventional mass media platforms were utilized for political marketing. Today, a large mass of aspirants, candidates, politicians and political parties have now adopted social media, with some managing multiple social media accounts, some recruiting social media managers to run their handles, some utilizing the platforms to campaign for votes, promote themselves or principals, share their profiles, achievements, plans, promises or manifestoes, and some attacking their opponents or issuing rebuttals once attacked by others.

Acknowledging the power of social media as the easiest, quickest and cheapest way to reach their target audiences, political parties are now utilizing social media as an essential political marketing tool (Mohammed & Ogwuche, 2021). But such utilization which opens up new opportunities, come not without peculiar challenges. Therefore, the focus of this paper is to examine the use of social media as a tool of political marketing in Nigeria, with some reflections on the challenges and opportunities which abound.

II. Theoretical Underpinnings

A theory is a set of assumptions, prepositions or accepted facts which attempts to provide a plausible or rational explanation of cause-and-effect (casual) relationships amongst a group of observed phenomena (Asemah, Nwammuo & Nkwam-Uwaoma, 2017). A theory provides the foundation upon which concepts and constructs are analyzed within the context of research. Technological Determinism Theory, Agenda Setting Theory, Cognitive Response Theory, Source Credibility are some of the theories which relate to this article. This section discusses one of the above theories plus one model: The Three-stage Model of Political Marketing.

2.1 Technological Determinism Theory (TDT)

Technological Determinism Theory is one theory that has no sole proprietor. At various times and climes, scholars like Thorstein Veblen (according to Asemah, Nwammuo & Nkwam-Uwaoma, 2017), Everett Rogers (according to Anaeto, Onabajo & Osifeso, 2008), Karl Max (according to Technological Determinism, 2016) and the legendary media futurologist, Marshal McLuhan were involved in the development of the theory. Technological Determinism notes that while the first major elaboration on TDT came from Karl Max (that renowned German economist), it contends that it was Marshal McLuhan who thoroughly developed the notion to its present status and should be accorded the greatest credit for it.

The basic assumptions of TDT are: technology in any given society defines the nature of the society; technology is viewed as the driving force of culture in the society; and technology determines a society's course of history. According to Chandler (2000) in Mohamed and Ogwuche (20210, TDT assumes that the complete form of society is seen as being determined by technology and that new technologies transform society at every

level, including institutions, social interactions and individuals. The theory explains that media technologies, especially new media and social media, determine how individuals in a given society think, feel, act, and that society moves from one technology age to another.

Stretching further, the theory implies that people learn, feel and think the way they do because of the messages they receive via the technology available at a material time and clime. This means the opinions, attitudes or behaviours the electorate hold about a candidate or political party are largely determined by the kind of messages they have received about the candidate or party via the prevailing media of the time, which is the social media tool. The understanding that the Internet, mobile telephony and social media constitute the communication technologies of the present age, partly explains why political marketing handlers vigorously put the social media to use in their quest to win support from the electorate.

2.2 The Three-Stage Model of Political Marketing

Propounded by Durmaz and Direkci (2015), the theory is presented as the most common, most applicable and most current model of political marketing. The model at the moment, according to its proponents, has been widely accepted and discussed in academic literature.

The model submits that, there are three stages in the political marketing process.

1. **Stage One:** Identify consumer demands, feed this into the product and messaging and refine it accordingly.

2. **Stage Two:** Inform the consumers of the changes to the product due to their demands and needs.

3. **Stage Three:** Deliver the refined product intended to satisfy the consumer's demands better, thus producing incrementally greater profit for the company (Durmaz & Direkci, 2015).

The assumption of the Three-stage Model of Political Marketing is that if parties can establish what voters want through proper feedback mechanism, proper polling methodology, effective public opinion listening, and can present political products which can fulfil such needs and wants, such parties are likely to emerge victorious.

This theory is critical to the focus of this article. It explains the processes involved in political marketing and shows why political marketers would heavily rely on social media messages for feedback, electorate's opinion analyses, needs assessment, creation of awareness, political mobilization, as well as promotion of a political candidate or party.

III. How Social Media Came to Be: Another Look at Mediamorphosis

An antecedental evaluation of the evolution of the mass media indicates that the introduction of a new medium does not tantamount to the demise of an existing old medium. The palpable growth and expansion of multiple media forms since the flip of the twenty first century, strongly supports this assertion. First coined in 1990 by Rogger Fiddler, Mediamorphosis is the term used to describe how media forms evolve and adapt to each other (Nwammuo, 2011). Mediamorphosis is a coinage from two words: media and morphosis (a scientific term that describes a gradual transformation from one form of an organism to another).

Social media or new media are not entirely new. Social media forms do not emerge spontaneously and independently from the old media. According to the submissions of Nnah (2016), the invention of the telegraph in 1844, the development of the pragmatic post in 1865, the invention of the telephone in 1890 and the radio in 1891 were necessary junctions in the long evolutionary voyage of social media. In the 20th century, social media began to change even more rapidly as a means of communication amongst users. After the first super computers created in 1940s, media scientists and engineers began to develop ways to create networks between those computers, which birthed interest in interconnected networking.

The earliest form of the Internet, such as CompuServe, were developed in the 1960s. Primitive forms of email were also developed during this time. In the 1970s, networking technology had improved and by 1979, UseNet was developed, which allowed users to communicate through a virtual newsletter. By 1980s, home computers were becoming more common. Though Internet Relay Chats (IRSc) were first used in 1988 and continued to be popular well into the 1990s, the first recognizable social media site 'Six Degrees' were created in 1977 (Umoh, 2017).

While the first social media site enabled users to upload profile pictures and create connectivity, the first blogging sites came on board in 1999. With the invention of blogging, social media began to explode in popularity, with sites like MySpac and LinkedIn gaining prominence in the early 2000s and sites like Photo-booket and Fliecke facilitating online photo sharing. According to Nnah (2016), YouTube emerged in 2005, Facebook and Twitter in 2006 and other social media platforms like Timblr, Spotify, Four-square came before, around and after them.

Today, there is a wide variety of social networking sites and many of them can be linked to allow across-postings. This linkage creates an environment where users can reach the maximum number of people without loosing the intimacy of a person-to-person communication. While one can only speculate what the

future of social media would look like in the next decade or century, it appears clear that social media networking will exist in some form for as long as humans exist.

IV. Social Media: Concept, Classification and Characteristics

For the most part, the technologies described today as social media or new media evolved over the years from the miniaturization and digitalization of communication gadgets and platforms that took place in the decades following the 1980s (Compagne, 2002 in Idiong, 2011). Social media are useful means of communication that connect people together.

Social media are a collection of Internet-enabled communication channels designed to support community-based inputting, interactions, content-sharing and networking. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) in Okolo, Ugonna, Nebo and Obikeze (2017) define social media as a collection of Internet-based applications that expand the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0 and that permit the creation and exchange of user-generated content. For Abubakar (2017), social media can be described as social interactions on the World Wide Web, including the behavioural and cultural patterns of the people using social software.

The technical platform for incremental development of social media is Web 2.0. Web 2.0 relates to the use of the Internet or the World Wide Web (WWW) in some technology-enabled form that allows content creation, content sharing and collaboration among Internet users. Web 2.0, in the words of Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) in Abubakar (2017), is the technical platform for the evolution of social media, as it allows online content and applications (e.g., blogs or wikis) to be modified by all users in a rather participatory and collaborative way. It relates to the second generation of the Internet emblemized by multi-way communication unlike the first generation, Web 1.0, where the Internet used was limited to providing information on a one-way communication and possibly with delayed feedback (Looy, 2016 in Abubakar, 2017).

Different classes of social media exist. Kaplan and Heintein (2010) identified the classes of social media as follows:

Social News: These are services which allow people to post various news items or links to outside articles and then allow its users to 'vote' on the items.

Micro-blogging: This is the service that focuses on short updates that are pushed out to anyone who subscribes to receive the updates such as Twitter.

Media Sharing: This refers to service which allows one to upload and share different things on social media such as pictures and videos.

Social Networks: These are services which enable us to connect with other people of similar interest and background. They usually have profiles, give room for people to setup groups known as bytes.

Prominent examples of social media include Facebook, Twitter, Google+, Wikipedia, LinkedIn, Reddit, Pinterest, Instagram, TikTok, etc. But since the concept of social media means different things to different people, what can help one identify them are their basic features or elements or characteristics.

The characteristics of social media or new media, according to Yergin (1998), as cited in Idiong (2011), include: Connectivity (connection of computers to one another by a communication line in order to provide online information access and/or sharing of peripheral devices), Interactivity (the characteristic makes it possible for passive viewers or readers to become active users), Virtuality (the computer-mediated ability to stimulate a certain reality that exists in the world), Digitality (input data are converted from analogue form to computer-processible binary codes and communicated quickly), Hyper-textuality (the means by which every information source is connected to another, forming a chain of interconnected strings of information or global commonwealth of information). Other characteristics of social media include immediacy, alteration, relationship, accessibility, usability, etc.

V. The Concepts of Marketing and Political Marketing

Marketing is not just "selling of products". It is much more. Kotler (2001), in Gbadeyan (2011), defines marketing as a process by which individuals or groups obtain what they need and want through creating, offering and freely exchanging products and services of value with others. Marketing is more comprehensively defined by the American Marketing Association (2017) as the activity, set of institutions and processes for creating, communicating, delivering and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners and society at large.

The notion of political marketing arises from a fusion between marketing and politics. As voters have become diverse and independent; as the political market has become more fragmented; and as the mass media audience and electorate have become more disintegrated; the significance of applying the concepts, ideas, principles and philosophies of marketing in politics has grown. But what exactly is political marketing?

Political Marketing is the application of marketing principles and procedures in political campaigns by various individuals and organizations (Newman, 1999, as cited in Mohamed and Ogwuche, 2021). Political Marketing does not start with deploying marketing tools to promote or sell a candidate, aspirant or political

party. Like its parent concept of marketing, political marketing starts with recognizing what the electorate need and designing and offering political products which can meet such needs in exchange for value (political support, endorsement and/or votes).

According to Project.com, Political marketing is not just about political advertising, party political broadcast and electoral speeches, but it covers the whole of party positioning in the electoral market. It is a relatively new terminology that relates to a summation of all activities of political parties or aspirants or candidates intended to affect voters and focused on influencing the individuals, regarding political candidates, to reach the maximum number of votes.

Lock and Harris (1996), as cited in Gbadeyan (2010), identify seven main differences between mainstream marketing and political marketing, which are briefly highlighted below:

- i. **Decision making schedule:** In political marketing, all voters are assured to make their decisions or choices on the same day. This makes it different from what obtains in mainstream marketing, where buyers' decisions are not anticipated all at once.
- ii. **Cost of choice:** Unlike other purchasing decisions, electorate's decisions have no direct or indirect cost attached to it. That is not the case in mainstream marketing.
- iii. **Voters must live with the electoral choices of the majority:** Unlike in conventional marketing where choice is individual, in political marketing choice is collective.
- iv. In elections, winners take it all. The rule is that majority carries the day.
- v. Political parties and candidates are complex intangible products which the voters cannot unbundle. In mainstream marketing, products can be unbundled.
- vi. While it is easy to come up with successful new products for conventional marketing, it may be difficult to form a new and successful party, especially in countries like America and Britain.
- vii. In most mainstream marketing situation, brand leaders stay in front. In election, new leaders may emerge and not necessarily the old ones winning an election all the time.

VI. Adopting the Social Media Tool for Political Marketing in Nigeria

The advent of social media has created a new paradigm for political marketing in Nigeria and across the globe. As Okolo, et al (2017) have noted, social media offer a variety of avenues through which political candidates can communicate with people and so have been used widely by politicians either to create awareness or to make the people see them as accessible and credible. With increasing penetration of social media in Nigeria, citizens have become more and more involved in the political process via social media tools. Citizens have more chances to get involved in political affairs than ever, due to the high proliferation of social media platforms in the 21st century (Darmaz & Direkci, 2015).

In Nigeria, especially since the buildup to the country's 2011 elections, the social media have increasingly been adopted as a veritable tool for political marketing. From a careful analysis of the political processes in the country since 2011, this segment of the paper highlights eleven ways by which social media have and can be adopted as a tool for political marketing in Nigeria.

1. **Use Social Media to Identify Electorate's Needs:** Like mainstream marketing, political marketing begins with recognition of needs. While political advertising is concerned with promotional efforts targeted at creating awareness and patronage (votes) for political products, political marketing starts from the point of identifying what the electorate need, before tailoring the political product to satisfy such needs, and then communicating such political products to the electorate as solutions to their needs. Social media can be deployed significantly to find out what the Nigerian electorate really need. What do they want? What do they frequently complain about on social media? Through use of social media monitoring, questionnaire, online opinion polls, a politician or political party or their social media handlers can figure out what the electorate want and design campaign messages in line with the wants, needs, demands and aspirations of the electorate.
2. **Setup and Manage Functional Social Media Handles to Maintain Virtual Identity:** In this era of digitality, virtuality, connectivity and hyper-textuality, every serious political aspirant or candidate is expected to have both real image and virtual image. The virtual identity of the of the aspirant or candidates is the one on social media handles such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Wikipedia, etc. One way to utilize the social media as a tool for political marketing is to set up, maintain and sustainably manage functional social media handles that reflect and represent the real personalities of the aspirants, candidates, parties, as much as possible. Professional social media managers can be engaged to handle this task, but with strict rules and monitoring to ensure virtual identity remains consistent with real identity.
3. **Join Critical Conversations and Stimulate Reasonable Engagements:** Except adopted as temporary strategy, it is usually not considered wise where a politician that aspires to lead stays aloof on critical issues of public concerns. When there are raging issues of public importance, the electorate want to know the stands and posturing of their leader or potential leader. For instance, when in May 2022, a Christian student of Shehu Shagari College of Education, Sokoto, was killed by a mob of other non-Christian students by the campus gate

for alleged offence of blasphemy against the Islamic faith, people with diverse religious persuasions in the country wanted to hear what the leading presidential aspirants in Nigeria would say about the incident, especially so in a year that would precede the nation's 2023 general elections.

4. **Go Viral as Deliberate Political Marketing Strategy:** In an opinionated article published on Vanguard Newspaper, Oluwale (2018) identified 'going viral' as one of the strategies of political marketing on social media. As a publicity stunt, politicians or candidates can strategically give out statements, actions, pictures, gestures, videos or any such social media content capable of spreading fast across social media platforms. This will increase publicity, media mentions and push the brand far and wide to the reach of the potential electorate. While going viral is usually good for publicity, it is good to endeavour not to always go viral for the wrong reasons. This is important because a political offering or product that often goes viral for the wrong reasons may gain publicity but lose reputation.
5. **Use Hashtag Campaigns:** Oluwale (2018) also referenced the use of hashtag campaigns as another effective political marketing strategy on social media. At the moment, Twitter is the king of hashtag communications. Translate the major physical campaign activities, highlights, gestures and deliverables to social media. This is how to keep on with the online audience and potential followers. In Nigeria at the moment, some very popular hashtag campaigns relating to the top three presidential candidates are: #Tinubu2023, #Tinubuforpresident2023, #bat, #tinubushettima, #AtikuOkowa2023, #Atiku, #AtikuIsComing, #Atikulated, #PeterObiforPresident, #PeterIsBetter, #OBIdient, #OBIdientlyYUSful, #Obidientmovement. One major way to achieve significant social media mileage regarding elections in Nigeria is to chronicle the real-life political activities of the candidate as social media hashtag campaigns.
6. **Share Political Press Releases and Rebuttals Via Social Media:** Social media are and can be used to share and syndicate political press releases which seek to promote the position of a candidate, an aspirant or a political party on an issue. In the game of power, there would almost always be a need to inform, clarify, explain, justify, persuade the public through the use of press releases. Such press releases are or can be readily shared to the candidate's online audiences using social media. Also, there may also be verbal attacks on the political products (persons, positions or parties) which may require rebuttals. Such rebuttals too can be shared using the tool of social media.
7. **Run Public Opinion/Electorate's Preference Polls:** This is one very strategic way that social media are and can also be deployed as a tool of political marketing. From time to time, there would always be need to gauge the opinion of the electorate on a topical issue of importance. There may also be need to conduct public opinion poll to measure the acceptability or public rating of political products in the eyes of the electorate. Given that a significant segment of the electorate are now netizens (citizens of the Internet community), an attempt to reach them through the candidate's or party's social media handles would be fast, productive and cost-effective.
8. **Deploy Social Media for Political Advertising:** Social media constitute a veritable channel for political advertising in the 21st century. Aside the use of social media for the various purposes discussed above including various forms of political communication, social media can also be deployed strategically for the specific purpose of promoting a political product through paid advertisement. Social media and other online platforms can be used to promote political advertisements such as splash pages, skyscraper, floating ad, mouse trapping, as identified by Dominick (2010) or others such as displayed ad, web banner ad, frame ad, pop-ups/pop-under, expanding ad, chat ad, online classified ad and mobile ad, as identified in Umoh (2017).
9. **Monitor and Track Election Outcomes:** Just like marketing is not considered complete until there is an exchange of market offering, political marketing is not considered complete until there is a political transaction (casting of votes). Since 2011, Nigeria's elections have been increasingly monitored and tracked on social media. Real time polling-unit-by-polling-unit updates are now shared through social media platforms. This increases transparency in the process. However, it is important that social media handlers avoid the anomaly of announcing election results ahead of the election umpire. In Nigeria, it is the duty of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to announce the results first. Anything other than that is illegality, an electoral offense of momentous consequences.
10. **Beyond Elections, Use Social Media to Promote Good Governance:** Even when a new government is put in place, the requirement of the 21st century is that such government must maintain a verifiable, functional and effective social media engagement. It is not enough to use social media to garner political support before elections. Use social media too to foster good governance. Share information about activities of government, plans and programmes of the administration, etc. Use social media too to promote accountability, financial transparency and good governance. With social media, it is possible to share budgetary projections, revenue allocations, projects and programmes of government and other vital information of government and governance. This way, the government can readily build trust and sustain its reputational value in the political marketplace.
11. **Use Social Media for Participatory Communication and Political Mobilization:** Political participation, as identified by Nwador, Dike and Henry (2020) and Asemah and Edegoh (2012), is a major pillar of a democratic state. Democracy is a participatory form of government. One of the ways through which Nigeria

can entrench its democracy would be by developing political participation using the social media tool. The government can hold regular townhall meetings with the people such that the meetings are streamed live on social media with comments, contributions and questions taken from social media audiences too. As part of the political marketing process too, the social media can be deployed as a tool for political mobilization. In the 21st Nigeria, physical rallies are no longer sufficient to mobilize a significant segment of the electorate, as some of such electorate may be on transit, in their work places, or may not be disposed to physically attend such political events at such time. And since most of the Nigerian electorate are now netizens, utilizing social media platforms for political rallies, campaigns and mobilizations now seem the way to go.

VII. Challenges and Opportunities in the Use of Social Media for Political Marketing in Nigeria

The adoption of social media as a tool for political marketing in Nigeria does not come without some peculiar consequences. Below is a pen portrait of such challenges as well as some areas of opportunities opened up by the adoption of social media for political marketing in Nigeria.

7.1 The Challenges

1. Inconsistency Due to Power Deficit: Social media thrive on the back of some enabling technologies like Internet, Web 2.0, mobile telephony, virtual reality, etc. These technologies are useless without applicable devices being powered by electricity or alternative energy sources. Though a significant segment of the political market in Nigeria can be reached on social media, some of such media accounts can be unreachable due to the absence of power to power up the enabling devices. Lack of power to charge phones, laptops and personal computers make multiple social media-enabling devices to stay off or inconsistently on, due to power failure.

2. Unreliable Delivery of Supporting Services: Nigeria is still a developing country, with a service delivery culture. Some service providers are not strong and reliable. Failures by various service providers have kept supposedly reachable components of the electorate in the political market outside the reach of social media.

3. Cyber Terrorism: There is a new genre of terrorism in Nigeria christened cyber terrorism. There are folks who use their heavy social media presence to bully, intimidate and terrorize others. Some of the terrorism attacks are meant for money (ransom), some are mainly targeted at tarnishing the reputation, goodwill or public relations capital of a politically exposed person in the political marketplace. Some handlers of politicians or political parties simply abandon their task of promoting their political product and go about harassing, embarrassing, and terrorizing political opponents of their principals.

4. Slow Adoption of Social Media Tool by Established Political Institutions: The Nigerian electorate, especially the youth population, are increasingly upwardly mobile and fast adopters of social media technologies. But some political institutions are still scared or reluctant to adopt the technology. The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), for instance, is not utilizing the social media tool enough. There is no reason INEC should not be able to speedily reach out to registered voters via social media. There is no reason registrations on INEC portal for voter's card should not start and finish online. There is no reason insisting that potential electorate in a 21st century Nigeria must physically visit INEC's offices before getting basic information or voter's education or even collecting their PCVs. In developed nations, the registration process can be done from start to end without visit any electoral institution and even the actual voting can be done via email on other online channels.

5. Little Professionalism: Social media management requires some specialized skillset. Political Marketing too requires specialized expertise. Recruiting just anybody to manage a candidate's or party's social media account is not a healthy practice. Some of the mis-firing by social media handlers of politicians in Nigeria is because those recruited to manage the politicians have no specialized knowledge and expertise in social media management, political communication, public relations, advertising and political marketing.

7.2 The Opportunities

With the increasing adoption of social media as a veritable tool for political marketing in Nigeria, a significant growth is anticipated in scope, scale and sophistication, vis-à-vis social media deployment in politics. This growth offers some opportunities for the present and the future. Service deliveries are gradually shifting from consistent offline crowd encounters to online personalized service experiences. It is therefore important that those who have certain skillsets should learn to adapt such skillsets and adopt new ones too, to enable them deliver similar services via online and social media platforms. The critical skillsets for the 21st century political marketer are gradually shifting from what it used to be.

In the nearest future, the volume of social media management services needed by aspirants, candidates and political parties would significantly increase. This would open up the space for more opportunities for professionals in the coming days.

One more area that offers opportunity for the future is legislation and institutionalization of social media management framework. The National and State Assemblies can come up with enabling legislations to support social media use for political marketing. Established political institutions must also do better at embracing the opportunities that social media offer, in the discharge of their statutory tasks.

VIII. Conclusion and Recommendations

As established in the course of this paper, social media constitute a veritable tool for political marketing in Nigeria. Social media platforms have increasingly been deployed by political aspirants, candidates, parties and/or their respective handlers for the purposes of political participation, political mobilization, political communication, political advertising and political marketing in Nigeria. As a tool freely used by the Nigerian electorate, especially the youth population, the Nigerian political masses are largely at home with social media; and so increasing adoption by politically exposed persons, parties, associations, institutions and their managers, is desirable.

To this end, this paper concludes that there is a significant connection between adoption of social media for political marketing and the awareness, support, endorsement or patronage an aspirant, a candidate or political party gets before, during and/or after an election. The increasing adoption of the social media tool for political marketing in Nigeria comes with some opportunities for the present and the future, but not without some challenges too. Inconsistency due to power deficit, unreliable delivery of supporting services, cyber terrorism, slow adoption of social media by established political institution have been identified as some of such challenges.

Below are a few recommendations of this paper.

1. The social media tool should increasingly be deployed not only for mainstream marketing, but specifically for political marketing. Politicians, aspirants, candidates, political parties and their social media handlers should utilize the social media tool. This is particularly useful as a significant segment of Nigerians are now social media netizens.
2. Politicians and political parties should use social media not only for political advertising (as the prevailing practice shows) but more for political marketing. Social media should be deployed for other political marketing tasks such as market selection, needs identification, audience analysis, product communication, electorate's opinion survey, election monitoring, as well as promotion of participatory governance.
3. Political marketers should strategically integrate the social media tool into the Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) mix designed for political marketing. Social media are not stand-alone tools; they should be combined with other tools for optimum results.
4. Political aspirants, candidates and parties should endeavour to recruit PR, Political Communication and Political Marketing experts to drive their campaigns. Political marketing should no longer be lowly esteemed as a nice-to-have, possible-to-do-without set of activities, but as a critical part of the whole efforts geared towards electoral victories in Nigeria.
5. To tackle some of the challenges identified in the course of this study, the Government and relevant service providers (like power-distribution companies, telecom service providers) must seek to significantly improve social media enabling environment, infrastructure and technologies; political institutions (like INEC) should adopt social media the more; and cyber terrorism should be checked by relevant authorities.

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