Title of Article: Facebook and political communication in the 2011 general elections

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Abstract

As the Internet has become ubiquitous, faster, and increasingly accessible to non-technical communities, social networking and collaborative services have grown rapidly, enabling people to communicate and share interests in many more ways. Sites like Facebook, Twitter, Linked-In, YouTube, Flicker, Second Life, delicious, blogs, wikis, and many more let people of all ages rapidly share their interests of the moment with others everywhere. Modern trends and advancement in New Media Technology seems to be eroding the glory of the traditional media. The tactics employed by Barack Obama in his presidential election campaign in the 2008 US elections has changed the rules of political communication and since then electoral campaigns have been more about social networking; using the existing and emerging social media platforms than the conventional approach which emphasized more of one-way communication with limited chances to generate feedbacks. This singular event brought social networks into limelight especially Facebook which has now been turned to an advertising medium especially for Nigerian politicians. Therefore this study examined the effectiveness and role that Facebook played as a tool for political communication and mobilisation in Nigeria during the 2011 general elections. Two Nigerian tertiary institutions were studied; the simple random sampling technique was employed to arrive at the two institutions. This study made use of the survey research method using questionnaire and interview as instruments in the gathering, analysis and interpretation of data. Findings showed that Facebook was used to a great extent by the aspirants in mobilising the support of the electorate. It was however found that mobilisation by Facebook was limited to the people who had internet access or smart phones with internet applications.

The paper therefore recommends among others that credibility of social media should be encouraged because presently, most political stories obtained on the web are mere gossips and rumours which most a times are baseless. A little bit of caution should be exhibited by those who post comments into these social media sites. This is because; some of these comments are derogatory and appalling.

KEY WORDS: Elections, Facebook, mobilisation, new media, political communication