

## **NIGERIA SOCIAL MEDIA CULTURE: EXPLORING CIVIC PARTICIPATION OF YOUTHS IN THE 2015 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION**

<sup>1</sup>Doris Ngozi Morah, <sup>2</sup>Chinwe Elizabeth Uzochukwu

<sup>1</sup>PhD- Department of Mass Communication, Madonna University, Nigeria.

<sup>2</sup>PhD - Department of Mass Communication, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Nigeria.

### **ABSTRACT**

The global expansions in the use of social media accessed on mobile technologies have brought about extraordinary opportunities in the society and enabled a new trend in political communication especially among youths. Interestingly, a new public sphere of social connectedness and discussion is apparently developing, with the dawn of social media in Nigeria. The political participation of Nigerian youth and their presence on social media via mobile technologies, was therefore, put on scholarship radar in order to determine how much influence it exerts on polity. Using survey research method and hinged on the Technological Acceptance Model, this study investigated how young people in three states of Enugu, Anambra and Ogun states were politically stimulated to participate during the 2015 Presidential Elections with respect to their social media presence accessed on mobile technologies. After a survey of 300 youths, purposively selected from the three selected states, results indicate that numerous mobile text messages and social media updates sent by politicians during the campaign influenced their voting decisions, though with a minimal effect. The study, thus, recommends that media educate the polity on the potentialities of mobile technologies in governance so that they can effectively utilize it as a political communication tool for political development in Nigeria.

**Keywords:** Mobile Media Technologies, Political Participation, Media Culture, Social Media, Nigerian 2015 Election

### **INTRODUCTION**

The fundamental pervasive nature of the social media today and its centrality in human communication has actually made it a precursor of modernity. Social media are ubiquitously used and are becoming interwoven with various sectors of society at an alarming rate (van Dijck

& Poell, 2015). The place of social media in almost every sector of the economy and society has transcended into a form of cyberculture. Today we have viral communities with cultural traits and ways of life. Although this evolution started with the advent of cellular phones, it seems like it's been there for ages as people have gotten accustomed to communicating messages and ideas on social media. This explains why every young Nigerian apparently, strive to own a smartphone and have a social media account. The first decade of social media gave rise to an online infrastructure which shaped the organization of societies and publics to large extents (van Dijck & Poell, 2015). Social media is, therefore, assumed to have a great impact on civic and political participation in Nigeria.

The Nigerian society used to be passive observers of information in the past, but not anymore today. The development of internet and mobile technology actually, created new possibilities for the provision and consumption of multimedia information in society (Drula, 2014). According to Okonji (2015) "the rate at which GSM was embraced led to its rapid growth in subscriber number that jumped from a paltry 400,000 lines before 2001, to a whopping 135 million active lines as at December 2014." Even at that, Jumia Mobile Report, 2018 showed that Nigeria is fast becoming a mobile-first country. The report demonstrates that, out of about "1.04 billion and 82 per cent mobile subscriptions in Africa, Nigeria with an estimated 193 million population, has 162 million mobile subscriptions, which amount to 84 per cent of the population" (Jumia Mobile Report, 2018). There were also, 21 million smartphone users with only 17 million smartphone users active on social media via their mobile phones in 2017 according to the Report. This implies that mobile technology is indeed pervasive which should equally enhance the usage of social media in the country.

The number of internet users in the country also increased to 98 million with a 65% penetration in 2017 compared to 53% in 2016 according to Jumia. Vanguardngr.com however, corroborates the Jumia Report, which predicted a 100 percent mobile penetration in 2019 based on the ever increasing number of affordable phones entering the Nigerian market, and the accelerated rate of mobile adoption among the public (vanguardngr.com). This clearly indicates a high evolving internet adoption rate in Nigeria and is an improvement of communication flow considering the potentials of the internet and social media.

Research has also shown that mobile devices enable quick and easy access to information as more people use their mobile devices to access sites and to read news (Drula 2014; Bosomworth in Drula 2014). This could explain why social media and mobile devices were employed prominently in the 2011 and 2015 general elections in Nigeria as veritable tools of civic vitality and political mobilization. Omojola and Morah (2014, p. 2) agree that "strong relationships exist between the media and politics", however, the "media can only impact positively or negatively

when its target audience has consumed the media content” (p.4). Thus, the electorates can be mobilized to participate in electoral activities through social media accessed on mobile format if they have access to political contents sent on mobile devices such as cell phones (that is very handy and affordable), social networks or even smartphone that allow high interactive.

In Nigeria, about 32.4 per cent of its population also constitutes of young population who are below the age of 18 years amidst a total population of about 193 million people (NPC 2006). These young populations are mostly youths who fall within the voting age in line with constitutional provisions. The Nigerian National Youth policy (2001, sec 1.2), even categorizes youths as comprising all young person between the ages 18 and 35 years who are citizens of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. The Federal Ministry of Youth Development in a report termed: 2012 National Youth Baseline Survey Report, however, estimated the population of Nigeria youths (15 – 35years) to be 64.1 million. This implies that most young Nigerians were born in the new media age and are likely to access information on social media especially those on elections.

Generally, people are becoming increasingly attuned to using social media in the conduct of elections. The techno-savvy nature of youths and the level of participation they display during elections have equally opened up a new vista in the field of political communication. The Nigerian general election of 2015 which was the 5<sup>th</sup> quadrennial election to be held in the country since the end of military rule in 1999, which in fact, witnessed the use of social media extensively for campaigns. This provided a public sphere to the contenders and the electorates to actively participate in the electoral process. This paper, therefore, attempts to empirically explore the level of civic participation of youths in the electoral process with a view to discovering their level of involvement with social media use on mobile during the election.

### **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Mobile technologies present a fresh dimension to political communication in Nigeria. Social media are already changing the way political aspirants attract supporters. Research has shown that most Nigerians have mobile phones and there is an increasing access to the internet through various channels (Jumia Report, 2018). Ekwenchi, Morah and Adum (2015) had noted that in 2013, Nigeria had a mobile broadband penetration rate of 10.1 per cent occupying the 93<sup>rd</sup> position in the global ranking and equally; ranked the 101<sup>st</sup> position in worldwide percentage of individuals using the Internet according to International Telecommunication Union (ITU) Broadband Commission Report 2014. This shows a rise in new media technology usage in the country, especially among youths.

The increasing visibility of social media accessed on mobile devices and the link with political participation, however, should present a platform for intellectual exploration. Considering the fact that Nigeria on 28<sup>th</sup> March 2015 held its presidential election, which elected President Muhammadu Buhari into power after months of some political media campaign. It became imperative, therefore, to adequately examine the relationship between mobile phone, and social media usage to the political participation of young Southern Nigerians in the 2015 election; and the extent of this use.

### **RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND QUESTIONS**

This study broadly aims to find out how political participation of Nigerian youth on mobile social media contributed to voting decisions during the 2015 elections; and how much influence those decisions exerted on the polity. To this end, the following research questions helped to signpost the study:

1. Which GSM network service is most preponderant to youths on mobile devices?
2. Which social media are most popularly accessed by youths on mobile devices?
3. Which social media accessed on mobile technologies served as most useful for political public forums among Nigerian youths?
4. How instrumental was social media on mobile devices to youth's response to political messages and activities during the 2015 presidential election in Nigeria?

### **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The Technological Acceptance Model (TAM) originally proposed by Fred Davis in 1986 which explains how users come to accept and use a technology (Morah & Omojola, 2018) forms the theoretical base of this study. The model suggests that when users are presented with a new technology, a number of factors influence their decisions about how and when they will use it. Chuttur (Morah & Omojola, 2018) suggests that users' motivation can be explained by three factors: perceived ease of use; perceived usefulness and attitude toward using the system. He argues that the attitude of a user towards a system is a major determinant of whether the user will actually use or reject the system. Davis, Bagozzi and Warshaw (1989) corroborate Chutter that, people's computer use can be predicted precisely from their plan while "perceived usefulness is a major determinant of people's intention to use computers, and perceived ease of use is a significant secondary determinant of people's intention to use computers. (p. 997)

TAM in this study transposes to how young people in Anambra, Enugu and Ogun states used mobile devices to access campaign messages on social media during the 2015 presidential

election as a result of their perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness; and even as generally accepted communication and media devices in Southern Nigeria.

### **Mobile Media Technology**

Mobile media technologies have continued to be a key enabler of economic and social development all over the world which is also not limited to the youths. Recent 2017 ITU Reports indicate that in 104 countries, more than 80% of the youth populations are online. The Report found that in developed countries, 94% of young people aged 15-24 use the Internet compared with 67% in developing countries; and only 30% in Least Developed Countries (LDCs). The proportion of young people aged 15-24 using the Internet (71%) was significantly higher than the proportion of the total population using the Internet (48%) while young people represent almost one-fourth of the total number of individuals using the Internet worldwide (ITU, 2017). In LDCs, 35% of the individuals using the Internet are young people aged 15-24, compared with 13% in developed countries and 23% globally (ITU, 2017). These figures clearly indicate that young people actively use the internet from their mobile devices and; is equally a great improvement in global internet use when compared to past reports. For instance, the ITU 2014 report had estimated that “over 50 per cent of the global population will have Internet access within three years.” There were speculations in the report that over 2.3 billion people will access mobile broadband by end of 2014, climbing steeply to a predicted 7.6 billion within the next five years. These predictions have actually come to pass as there are over three times as many mobile broadband connections today as there are conventionally fixed broadband subscriptions especially in Nigeria (Jumia Report, 2018). The popularity of broadband-enabled social media applications apparently continues to soar, with more than 2.62 billion people now active on social networks in 2018 (statista.com). This obviously indicated that mobile media usage has become widespread, almost globally especially among young people.

Research has also shown that mobile media has much potential which makes it apt for effective political communication and campaign (Ekwenchi, Morah & Adum, 2015; Morah & Omojola, 2018). Reaching the polity through a mobile device is referred to as mobile media-supported communication which Wei (2013, p.52) describes as communication via a mobile platform for the exchange of information between and among a small number of identified and connected users. This provides a means to access much information on the internet as a result of media convergence even as Wei argues that the consumption of mobile news is highly personalized, and subject to the control of mobile device owners. Research evidently shows that mobile media use has a link to social media use as most people tend to access the web on mobile. Donner and Gitau (Humphreys, 2013) agree that when people access the Internet with their phones, unsurprisingly, they often use social media. There is, therefore, a great possibility that political

campaign messages can even thrive through mobile social media communications on mobile devices, especially among young people that are most commonly found online (Morah & Omojola, 2018). Since young people in Nigeria, tend to acclimatize easily with technological trends, especially mobile devices as millennial in line with Morah & Omojola (2018), the choice of using social media for political communication is in fact, a good one. McMahon and Pospisil (2005) corroborate that millennial are heavy users of cell phones who must have used mobile technology devices for texting, e-mailing, and accessing the Web and interactive media since childhood.

### **Political Participation and Social Media**

The political sphere has witnessed significant transformation since the advent of mobile and social media. Political aspirants now reach their prospective voters through phone calls, mobile text messages, social media chats and online post and updates. Recent Pew Research Center data suggest that most Americans are increasingly accessing news through social media despite concerns about its accuracy (journalism.org). Donner and Gitau (Humpherys, 2013) also, found that in places like South Africa, it is cheaper to send a message via mobile social media, like Mxit, than it is to send an SMS. In Nigeria, using mobile social media apps like Whatsapp and Facebook are free and cheaper than sending an SMS. Globally, social media penetration is vast and increasing; with Facebook, for instance, having over 1.86 billion monthly active users in 2018(statista.com). This obviously underlines that mobile social media apps can be effectively deployed by political candidates to reach many people due to its reduced cost.

Over the years, the advent of new media has even permeated most aspects of our lives, especially that of the young generation. Olabamiji (2014) notes that social media is part of young people's political culture. Youths rely on the internet for any type of information including political information, probably because of ease of use and cost. Even in America, social media was found to be preponderantly used for news due to its ease of use (convenience) (21%) and interactivity (8%) in 2018 (journalism.com). It is, therefore, assumed that the vast amount of political information available to youths on the internet will probably propel them to actively get involved in politics. Knowledge about politics is, however, attained through political learning via various sources including exposure to political information on social media (Rahmawati, 2014). Vreese and Boomgarden (2006) argue that youths' political knowledge and participation in politics are very important to the democratic process in every country. This is because; acquisition of political knowledge is actually a strong predictor of political participation.

Studies on patterns of political participation in Africa, moreso, reveal that political participation in Africa is highly gendered, as men are significantly more politically active than women (Omojola & Morah, 2014; García-Peñalosa & Konte, 2013; Isaksson 2010) especially under the

traditional mass media dispensation. Even at that, García-Peñalosa & Konte, (2013, p.8), assume a possibility that “traditional gender attitudes see only men as entitled to have political opinions; implying that women would not have a view on the desirability or not of democratization”. Social media platforms being a free and interactive medium is, however, most likely to favour equal participation due to its ease of use and access, making more women to become more interested in politics. These changes in media use pattern, of course, culminate to online political participation. Jensen (2010) corroborates the point that the Internet presently possesses unique potentials to improve civic engagement and democracy unlike what obtains in the traditional mass media.

### **Social Media Culture and Nigerian Elections**

The Nigerian Electoral Act No.6, 2010 (amended in 2015 as the Principal Act) which is the legal framework governing the conduct of elections in Nigeria Act did not provide specific guidelines on the use of social media in elections, though it contains a number of sections that made references to the use of electronic media in the conduct of elections. The 2010 and 2015 amended Electoral Acts (placing.org) stipulations, however, imply that social media is not clearly included as a medium of political communication, though scholarly definitions of social media (van Dijck & Poell, 2015, Baran, 2009) shows that it is indeed, electronic. In the present digital age, therefore, it is not surprising that Nigerian politicians equally engulfed in the euphoria of smart mobile devices advancements, took to social media as means of political campaigning; to communicate their manifestoes and garner votes. The 2011 general elections initially, experienced an amazing use of social media as a political communication tool in Nigeria (PLAC, 2012, p.2).

There were three major issues which underlined the great use of social media tools during the 2011 elections (PLAC, 2012). Firstly, the use of social media in Nigeria’s 2011 elections reflects a global trend towards “internet elections” or “e-electioneering” (Macnamara in PLAC, 2012, p.3). Another reason was the tendency of some Nigerian politicians to tap into the opportunities offered by the social media for online campaigning. This happened during the 2011 general elections, when many politicians, particularly presidential aspirants, used social media tools to connect with voters and their constituency. Facebook and Twitter were apparently, then the most widely used social media platforms by the politicians. For example, in December 2010, it was estimated that Goodluck Jonathan had nearly 300,000 fans on his Facebook page (Ekine) as cited in (PLAC, 2012). Observation showed that other presidential aspirants like Dele Momodu, Ibrahim Shekarau, Nuhu Ribadu, Atiku Abubakar, and Ibrahim Babangida, operated Twitter and other social media accounts as well as some political parties such as Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN), and Congress for Progressive Change (CPC).

This obviously indicates that even before the 2015 general elections, Nigerian politicians have become accustomed to using social media for election purposes. The third issue that underscores the use of social media in Nigeria's 2011 elections is the tendency of Nigerian civil society and the electorate to take up social media as a tool for improving the efficiency of election observation due to past ugly precedents (PLAC, 2012). Prior to the conduct of the 2011 elections, elections in Nigeria issues like vote rigging and other electoral malpractices normally arise. The reason is, however, conspicuous as research shows that the 2003 and 2007 elections were particularly marked with some dissatisfaction by candidates, voters and observers.

Even at that, Ibrahim & Ibeanu (PLAC, 2012) also argue that Nigerian elections are characterized by issues such as disenfranchisement of prospective voters; snatching of ballot boxes from election officials; the filling of the boxes with invalid ballot papers, as well as allegations of conspiracy between election officials and politicians to alter election results and undermine popular mandate. The convenience, interactivity and participatory nature of social media on mobile devices, therefore, seen as a great succour to combating past ugly electoral precedents. Based on past issues and trends in technology, the Nigerian political terrain was, therefore, apparently ripe to adopt social media and mobile technology as a viable political communication tool in the 2015 election.

#### **METHOD, POPULATION, SAMPLING AND INSTRUMENTATION**

The study adopted the survey research method to investigate how young people in three states in Southern Nigerian were politically activated to participate in the April 2015 presidential elections on the instrumentality of social media connected via mobile devices. Three rural communities in three states were purposively selected comprising: Anambra with a population size of 4,055,048 residents; Enugu state (population of 3,267,837) and Ogun state with a population of 3,751,140 residents (NPC, 2006). The three Local Government Areas in the selected states comprise Awka South, Enugu East and Sango Ota were studied using a purposive sampling method to investigate mobile social media use during the election period. The three LGAs were chosen for two main reasons. One is the location of three large universities that is: Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka; Caritas University, Emene and Covenant University, Ota, which has a predominant youth population apt for this study in the LGAs. Next is the residence of an even larger population of other young artisans and business people who were assumed to be active mobile social media users in the LGAs.

The population of study, therefore, comprises residents of the three communities in three selected states out of which a sample of 300 residents of Awka South comprising Okpuno, Amansea and Ifite Awka; Enugu East comprising Iji Nike, Owo and Emene; and Ado Odo/Ota comprising Owu, Awori and Sango were drawn; using purposive sampling technique to



represent the entire population. According to the 2006 census (NPC, 2006), the population of Ota is 163,783 residents; that of Enugu East is 279,089; while Awka South has a population of 189,049 residents. This implies that the overall population of the study area comprised 631,921 residents of the three selected local government areas. The decision to adopt a purposive sampling in selecting 300 respondents from three LGAs was taken because; though there was a heavy concentration of voters who participated during the last presidential election political activities in the states, it was not everyone that has a mobile phone; and even a social media account.

Primary data were thus collected by means of a questionnaire specially developed for this study. The questionnaire was developed and piloted before distribution in order to validate the contents in terms of validity, logic and accuracy. The final version of the questionnaire which was distributed using face-to-face technique consisted of two parts. The first part of the questionnaire was designed to identify the demographic characteristic of the respondents such as gender, age, sex and educational background while the other contains a series of questions about major research questions guiding the study.

## **FINDINGS, DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSIONS**

The data analyzed was obtained from copies of the questionnaire distributed face to face among youths from three states Local council areas of Awka South comprising Okpuno, Amansea and Ifite Awka; Enugu East comprising Iji Nike, Owo and Emene and Ado Odo/Ota comprising Owu, Awori and Sango. Out of 300 copies of the questionnaire distributed, 249 representing a response rate of 83% was completed and returned. Analyses of data are presented below on the thematic and demographic variables underlying this study using SPSS data analysis software.

### **Demographic Data**

In terms of the age of the respondents, results from the study indicated that 189 of the respondents sampled representing 77.8% are youths between the age brackets of 18-22 years; 46 respondents representing 18.9% are within age brackets 23-28 years. Other age brackets samples is a negligible 3.3%, representing age brackets 29-40 years. It is obvious that a good proportion of the respondents are youths. Out of the selected sample investigated, 128 representing 54.2% are females while 108 representing 45.8% are males. Meanwhile results equally show that majority (195) of the youths sampled representing 81.3% are single while 45 respondents represented by 18.7% are married which implies that most of the youths used for the study are single. Most of the respondents are educated as findings reveal that 168 respondents used in the study have attained tertiary education, 7.4% secondary education, 7.0%, primary education while 2.0% indicated they are not literate. This implies that most of the respondents are young people

who are educated to a large extent and are, therefore, likely to be social media literate and compliant.

**RQ1 Which GSM network service is most preponderant to the youth on mobile devices?**

Analysis of data from findings shows that 252 respondents representing 84% make use of mobile phones more than all other mobile devices. Nineteen respondents representing 6.3% make use of laptop and computers; 15 respondents representing 5% use pagers mostly; while 11 and 3 respondents representing 4% and 1% respectively indicated that they use tablets and PDAs mostly. The implication of this finding is that more than three-quarter of the respondents are using mobile phones more than other devices.

**Table 1: Service providers used by respondents on mobile device**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>MTN</b>	169	68.2%
<b>GLO</b>	6	2.4%
<b>Airtel</b>	37	14.9%
<b>Etisalat</b>	36	14.5%
<b>Total</b>	248	100%

Data from table 1 above indicates that 169 respondents representing 68.2% make use of MTN services, 37 and 36 respondents representing 14.9% and 14.5%, respectively use Airtel and Etisalat services while only six respondents representing 2.4% use GLO services. This finding indicates that MTN is the most preferred service used by respondents. This further goes to show the popularity of the MTN service over other service providers in Nigeria.

**RQ2 Which social media is the most popularly accessed by youth on mobile devices in Nigeria?**

**Table 2: Activities Respondents Use Their Mobile Device For**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Making call</b>	93	37.3%
<b>Sending e-mails</b>	3	1.2%
<b>Browsing</b>	55	22.1%
<b>Social networking</b>	55	22.1%

<b>SMS</b>	10	4%
<b>Others</b>	37	15%
<b>Total</b>	249	100%

Table 2 indicates that 93 respondents representing 37.3% use their mobile device for making calls. Fifty five respondents representing 22.1% ,respectively browse as well as engage in social networking with their mobile device, while only 13 respondents representing a total of 5.2% use their mobile devices for sending e-mails and SMS. Making voice calls is, therefore, the most predominant activity most respondents use their mobile devices to perform.

**Table 3: Respondents most popularly used social networking sites on mobile device**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Popularity on social networking</b>		<b>Social networking frequently visited by respondents</b>	
<b>Facebook</b>	101	40.7%	146	59.1%
<b>2go</b>	5	2.0%	20	8.1%
<b>Twitter</b>	8	3.2%	29	11.7%
<b>Blogging</b>	12	4.8%	23	9.3%
<b>MySpace</b>	2	1.4%	3	1.3%
<b>Whatsapp</b>	121	48.9%	26	10.5%
<b>Total</b>	249	100%	247	100%

Data in Table 3 shows that a greater 121 respondents representing 48.9% indicated they popularly use WhatsApp social networks followed by 101 respondents represented by 40.7% who indicated that Facebook is their most popular social network. Other responses include blogging, which has 12 respondents representing 4.8%; sixteen respondents representing 3.2% who agreed that twitter is their most popular social network; while 5 and 2 respondents representing 2.0% and 1.4% respectively identified 2go and MySpace as their most popular networks. This shows that among youths in Anambra, Enugu and Ogun states, Whatsapp is their most popularly used social network sites followed by Facebook.

Further investigations in terms of the platform they visit often with their mobile devices on Table3 however, reveal that respondents visit Facebook more than any other social network site. This is shown by 146 respondents representing 59.1 percent. The findings of this study are congruent with earlier studies that have indicated that youths are very familiar with and engage much in Facebook with friends and acquaintances (Kenechukwu, Morah & Uzochukwu, 2012). This may be because it is cheaper than making calls to contact friends. Other social networking

sites, which respondents use their mobile devices to access include: Twitter represented by 29 (11.3%); blogs represented by 23 (9.3%); 2go represented by 20 (8.1%); WhatsApp represented by 26 (10.5%); and MySpace 1.3 percent.

In terms of the frequency of use of social media with mobile devices, responses show that 190 respondents representing more than three-quarter of the sampled population identified that they regularly access social media sites with their mobile devices. Only 2.1% of the respondents indicated that they scarcely use mobile devices for social media purposes, while 7.6% of the respondents cannot specify their frequency of use of social media with their mobile devices. This is an indication that using mobile devices for social media purposes is almost taking up the communication landscape, especially among youths in Southern Nigeria.

### **RQ3 Which Social Media Accessed On Mobile Technologies Serve As Most Useful for Political Public Forums Among Southern Nigerian Youth?**

**Table 4: Most useful social media on mobile devices for political information**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Facebook</b>	152	63.6%
<b>2go</b>	6	2.5%
<b>Twitter</b>	8	3.3%
<b>Blogging</b>	10	4.2%
<b>BBM</b>	7	2.9%
<b>Whatsapp</b>	43	18.1%
<b>Instagram</b>	13	5.4%%
<b>Total</b>	249	100%

As shown in table 4, data regarding the most useful social media respondents' access to mobile devices for political messages indicate that Facebook ranked highest with a percentage of 63.6%. This is followed by Whatsapp with a percentage of 18.1%. For other social media as shown from the table it indicates that 2.5% use 2go, 3.3% use Twitter, 4.2% use blogs, 2.9% use BBM while 5.4% use Instagram. It could be deduced from this analysis that young people in Anambra, Enugu and Ogun states are familiar with and use mobile Facebook and Whatsapp for getting political messages more than other social media sites or device. This is probably largely due to the perceived usefulness of these social media and ease of use of mobile devices. This clearly

implies that Facebook and Whatsapp was, therefore, the most useful social media for political communication among southern Nigerian youths during the 2015 elections.

**Table 5: Respondents extent of use of mobile devices for political activities in 2015**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Respondents who received political information through mobile devices</b>		<b>Respondents who use their mobile devices during last election</b>		<b>Respondents who participated in the last election with their mobile devices</b>	
<b>Yes</b>	118	49.2%	111	49.3%	82	33.3%
<b>No</b>	122	50.8%	114	50.7 %	164	66.7 %
<b>Total</b>	240	100%	225	100%	246	100%

Table 5 shows that more than half of the respondents (50.8%) indicated that they did not receive political campaign information through their mobile devices; while a little less than half of the respondents (49.2%) indicated that they did receive such information. This demonstrates that most of the respondents did not receive political campaign information through their mobile devices. Also, more than half of the respondents (50.7%) did not use their mobile devices during the last election, while less than half of the respondents (49.3%) did. Again, 164 respondents representing 66.7% indicated that they did not participate in the last election with their mobile devices while 82 respondents representing 33.3% did. The implication of these findings is that even though respondents had earlier indicated an interest in making use of mobile devices and social media, in terms of its usage for election matters, there was a clear indication those mobile devices were not effective and actively put to use in the 2015 presidential election. Apparently, this might be a result of the identified challenges revealed on further probes on research question four.

**RQ4 How instrumental were social media accessed on mobile devices towards youth’s response to political messages and activities in the Nigerian 2015 presidential election?**

**Table 6: Usefulness of social media in the success of 2015 Nigerian presidential election**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Respondents influenced through social media to vote last election</b>		<b>Usefulness of social media to the success of Nigerian election</b>	
<b>Yes</b>	89	37.9%	136	58.6%
<b>No</b>	99	42.1%	35	15.1%

<b>Not sure</b>	47	20.0%	61	26.3%
<b>Total</b>	235	100%	232	100%

From table 6, question sought to find out the instrumentality of social media to the success of the last election in the three selected states. Responses indicated that 99 respondents representing 42.1% assert that they were not influenced through their social media to vote during the 2015 presidential election; 89 respondents representing 37.9% indicated that they were influenced to vote through their social media, while 47 respondents representing 20% were not sure that social media played any significant role in influencing them to vote in the 2015 election. This demonstrates that social media played some role in persuading people to participate in the 2015 election, though to some extent (89%).

Further investigation to find out the usefulness of social media to the success of Nigeria election indicated that, 136 respondents representing 58.6% indicated that social media were useful to the success of the last general election in Nigeria, 61 respondents representing 26.3% indicated they are not sure that social media was useful to the success of the election while 35 respondents representing 15.1% indicated that it was not useful to the success of the general election. This, of course, corroborates extant literature that social media has impacted on political communication and civic engagements.

**Table 7: Ways social media were useful to the success of the 2015 presidential election**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>It motivates people to be part of the electoral process</b>	61	25.7%
<b>It helps people to be abreast of information about election</b>	85	35.9%
<b>It helps people to participate in the public sphere</b>	10	4.2%
<b>All of the above</b>	81	34.2%
<b>Total</b>	237	100%

In terms of the usefulness of social media during the last election, in table 7 a total of 85 respondents representing 35.9% indicated that social media helped them to keep abreast of information about the election, 61 respondents representing 25.7% indicated that it motivates people to be part of the electoral process, while 4.2% of the respondents indicated that it helps them to participate in the public sphere. On the whole, 81 respondents representing 34.2% are of

the opinion that social media performed these various functions during the 2015 presidential election in their states.

In as much as respondents indicated they used their mobile devices during the last election, they were however without some challenges. As indicated in a further question, a reasonable proportion of the respondents 148, representing 59.4% indicated time wasting as a major challenge. Fifty four respondents representing 21.7% identified poor services from mobile service providers as a challenge; another 17.2% of the respondents indicated that it makes them lose focus on other things whenever they are using their mobile devices. Generally, the findings corroborate previous study (Morah, 2018) and tables 4, 5 and 6 to show that new media technologies are adopted based on factors like accessibility, usefulness and ease of use. This further strengthens the tenets of the technology acceptance model and is therefore a contribution to knowledge.

## **DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The 2004 American Presidential election campaign initiated a new trend in political advancement for the Internet. About 63 million Americans utilized the Internet for political information while 43 million were believed to have, apparently, discussed politics via e-mail or other online platforms during the 2004 election (Williams & Tedesco 2006). Barack Obama in the 2008 election campaign was also, believed to have pioneered the use social media for political mass mobilization, thereby, attracting young voters during the primary campaigns. President Trump has notably been using social media as a very important tool in governance as well as other world leaders and Nigeria is not an exception. This was thoughtfully demonstrated during the 2011 election in Nigeria when most of the electorate were politically mobilizes through mobile phone and social media to come out and vote.

This study, which examined the utilization of mobile in the Nigeria 2015 presidential election, has, therefore, shown that most Southern Nigerian youths (66.7%) did not vote as a result of the political messages they received from social media through their mobile devices as anticipated by political parties and the public. Although most of them (81.7%) utilize their mobile device for social media activities most especially on Whatsapps and Facebook for social interactions and networking, its use for political intention was found to be minimal. The result of the analysis has equally, shown that mobile devices occasioned by the emergence of ICT have gradually taken over the Nigerian communication landscape as virtually all the respondents showed evidence of ownership of one mobile device or the other.

This finding is a justification of the Technological Acceptance Model adopted as a theoretical foundation in this study which suggests that when users are presented with a new technology,

their decision about how and when they will use the technology is dependent on their perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness of the device (Morah, 2018). Also, we could deduce from the data that the predominant new media technology used by most respondents for a considerable length of time is chiefly the mobile phone (feature and smartphones). This supports the views of (Wei, 2013; Ekwenchi, Morah & Adum, 2015) that the mobile device is personal, interactive, internet-enabled and user-controlled portable platform that provides for the exchange and sharing of personal and non-personal information among users who are interconnected.

Findings also show that the social media are used mainly for making calls, browsing and engaging in social networks; while Facebook and Whatsapp were found to be the most popularly used social network by Southern Nigerian youths for getting political messages. However, despite the popularity of mobile devices among the youths, findings further indicate that such popularity did not translate into its use in proactive political activities as a little above half of the respondents did not receive political information through mobile devices; nor used their mobile devices during the 2015 presidential election; nor participated in the last election with their mobile devices. Implicitly, Nigerian youths use mobile devices for other activities apart from political activities, even though they assert that social media was useful in the Nigeria election. Therefore, one wonders what could be the reason for the apathy in the Nigerian 2015 presidential election.

There were, nevertheless, lots of challenges as a reasonable proportion of the respondents, 59.4% indicated time wasting as a major obstacle; 21.7% identified poor services from mobile service providers as a challenge; while another 17.2% of the respondents indicated that it makes them lose focus on personal desires when they use mobile devices. However, some of the respondents (1.6%) could not understand the meaning or the reason for the mobile texts from some political parties. From the data obtained and analyzed for the study, the following conclusions can thus be drawn: that though youths are getting adapted to mobile devices as a means of communication through social media such as Facebook and Whatsapp which are more prevalent among youths; they did not employ their mobile devices as expected during the Nigerian 2015 presidential election to any reasonable extent..

Therefore, it is recommended that the polity be educated on the usefulness of social media in governance prior to the 2019 elections so that they can utilize it as an effective political communication tool. The Nigerian Communication Commission should also help maintain high standards among mobile network providers in Nigeria to overcome the incessant cases of high data tariff and poor network receptions in the telecom industry. The Nigerian electoral body, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) should also, establish a social media tracking centre to monitor, collate, and interpret trends and reports during elections to further



intensify efforts at e-Governance and e-Democracy as practiced in other parts of the world. They should try and establish a guiding principle for the use of social media as a political communication tool in Nigeria in view of the forthcoming 2019 elections. Most importantly, INEC, civil society organizations and relevant security agencies should establish modalities to systematically verify information reported by citizen observers through the mobile social media during the forthcoming 2019 elections. More studies should be conducted on the use of mobile devices in subsequent elections in other parts of the country.

## REFERENCES

- Baran, S. J. (2009). *Introduction to Mass Communication*. Retrieved from [http://highereducation.mheducation.com/sites/0767421906/student\\_view0/chapter3/chapter\\_overview.htm](http://highereducation.mheducation.com/sites/0767421906/student_view0/chapter3/chapter_overview.htm)
- Chuttur, M. Y. (2009). Overview of the technology acceptance model: Origins, developments and future directions. Indiana University, USA. *Sprouts: Working Papers on Information System*. Retrieved from <http://sprouts.aisnet.org/9-37>
- Davis, F. D., Bagozzi R.P., and Warshaw P.R. (1989). "User acceptance of computer technology: A comparison of two theoretical models" *Management Science*. 35 (8) pp. 982–1003.
- Donner, J., and Gitau, S. (2009). "New paths: Exploring mobile-centric internet use in South Africa" *Paper presented at the International Communication Association Preconference on Mobile Communication, Chicago, IL*.
- Drula G. (2014). Media convergence and mobile technology. *Journal of Media Research*. 3 (20) pp. 47-71.
- Ekwenchi O. C., Morah, D. N. & Adum, A. N. (2015). Smartphone usage on Nigerian campuses: Who is doing what on Whatsapp? *International Journal of Advanced Multidisciplinary Research Report*. 1, (1). <http://rex.compan.com/index.php/ijamrr/article/view/49/48>
- García-Peñalosa C. and Konte M., (2013). Why are women less democratic than men? Evidence from sub-saharan african countries. *CESifo Working Paper Series 4524, CESifo Group Munich*. Retrieved from [http://www.cesifo.de/portal/page/portal/DocBase\\_Content/WP/WPCESifo\\_Working\\_Papers/wp-cesifo-2013/wp-cesifo-2013-12/cesifo1\\_wp4524.pdf](http://www.cesifo.de/portal/page/portal/DocBase_Content/WP/WPCESifo_Working_Papers/wp-cesifo-2013/wp-cesifo-2013-12/cesifo1_wp4524.pdf)
- Humphreys L. (2013). "Mobile social media: Future challenges and opportunities" *Mobile Media & Communication*. 1 (1). pp.20–25.

- Jensen, K.B. (2010). *Media Convergence: The Three Degrees of Network, Mass, and Interpersonal Communication*. London: Routledge.
- Isaksson, A. (2010). Political participation in Africa: Participatory inequalities and the role of resources. *Afrobarometer Working Paper no. 121*, 1-26.
- ITU (2017). *ICT Facts and Figures 2017*. ICT Data and Statistics Division. Geneva <https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Statistics/Documents/facts/ICTFactsFigures2017.pdf>
- Jumia Mobile Report 2018 in Nigeria. Retrieved from <https://www.jumia.com.ng/mobile-report/>
- Kenechukwu, S., Morah, D. N. & Uzochukwu, C. E. (2012). New media and the public Sphere: Perspectives for the growth of advocacy journalism in Nigeria. *Journal of Linguistics and Communication Studies*, 2 (1), 1-15.
- McMahon, M. T., & Pospisil R. (2005). Laptops for a digital lifestyle: Millennial students and wireless mobile technologies. In Goss, H. (ed.), *Proceedings of Ascilite 2005 Conference*, Brisbane, Australia: Queensland University of Technology. pp. 421–431.
- Morah, D. N. & Omojola O. (2018). Social media use and entrepreneurship development in Nigeria: Lagos and Onitsha in focus. *International Journal of Advance Study and Research Work*, 1(5), 15-26.
- Nigerian Population Commission (2006). Retrieved from: <http://www.population.gov.ng/index.php/state-population>.
- National Youth Policy and Strategic Plan of Action. Retrieved from <http://www.youth-policy.com/Policies/Nigeria%20National%20Youth%20Polic...>
- News use across social media platforms 2018- pew research center. Retrieved from [www.journalism.org/2018/09/10/news-use-across-social-media-platforms-2018/](http://www.journalism.org/2018/09/10/news-use-across-social-media-platforms-2018/)
- Nigeria becoming mobile-first country with 162m subscribers – Jumia (March 15, 2018). Retrieved from <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2018/03/nigeria-becoming-mobile-first-country-162m-subscribers-84-penetration-rate-jumia/>
- Number of social network users worldwide from 2010-2021(in billions). Retrieved from <https://www.statista.com>

- Okonji, E. (2015). GSM Revolution: 14 Years of Accomplishments, Challenges. Retrieved from <http://www.thisdaylive.com/articles/gsm-revolution-14-years-of-accomplishments-challenges/199772/>
- Olabamiji, O. M., (2014). Use and misuse of the new media for political communication in Nigeria's 4th Republic, 4(2), 44–53. Retrieved from [www.issre.org](http://www.issre.org).
- Omojola, O. & Morah, D. N. (2014). *Media Content Consumption and Influence on Women's Political Visibility*. In **Omojola O., PhD (Ed.)** *Women's Political Visibility and Media Access: The Case of Nigeria*. Newcastle, United Kingdom: Cambridge Scholars Publishing. 1-27.
- Policy and Legal Advocacy Center PLAC (2012). Social Media and the 2011 elections in Nigeria. ISBN 978-978-52181-0-7
- Social Media and Youth Online Political Participation: Perspectives on Cognitive Engagement. Retrieved from: [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/293962732\\_Social\\_Media\\_and\\_Youth\\_Online\\_Political\\_Participation\\_Perspectives\\_on\\_Cognitive\\_Engagement](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/293962732_Social_Media_and_Youth_Online_Political_Participation_Perspectives_on_Cognitive_Engagement)
- The State of Broadband 2013: Universalizing Broadband. (Broadband Commission, 2013). Retrieved from <http://ict-industry-reports.com/2013/09/28/global-state-of-broadband-itu/>
- The State of Broadband 2014: Broadband for All. (Broadband Commission, 2014). Retrieved from <http://www.broadbandcommission.org/Documents/.../bb-annualreport2014.pdf>.
- van Dijck, J. & Poell, T. (2015). Social Media and the Transformation of Public Space. *Social Media & Society*, pp. 1–5. DOI: 10.1177/2056305115622482
- Vreese, C. H. De, & Boomgaarden, H. (2006). News, political knowledge and participation : The differential effects of news media exposure on political knowledge and participation, *Acta Politica*, 41, 317–341. doi:10.1057/palgrave.ap.5500164.
- Wei, R. (2013). Mobile media: Coming of age with a big splash. *Mobile Media & Communication*, 1, (1) pp.50-56.
- Williams, A. P. & Tedesco, J. C., (Eds.) (2006). *The Internet Election: Perspectives on the Web in Campaign 2004*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.
- 2015 Amendments to the 2010 Electoral Act – Policy and Legal Advocacy Center PLAC  
Retrieved from <http://placng.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/factsheet.pdf>

2012 National Baseline Youth Survey Report. Retrieved from  
<http://www.nigerianstat.gov.ng/pages/download/191>