

Strategic Communication and Electoral Outcomes in Nigeria: Examining the Influence of New Media Campaigns on Voter Behaviour

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Abstract:

This study explores the role of strategic communication in Nigerian political campaigns, emphasizing the impact of new media and messaging strategies on electoral outcomes. This research aims to fill this gap by providing a comprehensive analysis of how strategic communication, facilitated by new media, influences political campaigns and electoral results in Nigeria. Two pertinent theories deployed for the study are the Agenda-Setting Theory and the Uses and Gratifications Theory. A questionnaire survey was administered to a diverse sample of Nigerian voters, yielding insights into demographic characteristics, primary sources of political information, and perceptions of strategic communication effectiveness. This study underscores the critical role of strategic communication in Nigerian political campaigns, particularly through digital platforms. The findings reveal that a well-educated and economically diverse electorate, predominantly middle-aged and self-employed, engages actively in political discourse. With social media emerging as the primary source of political information, platforms such as Instagram and Twitter have become pivotal in mobilizing and influencing voters, especially young adults. The study highlights that message consistency and clarity significantly impact voter behavior, reinforcing the effectiveness of emotional and issue-based messaging. It is recommended that political organizations and media houses should conduct digital literacy campaigns to help voters critically assess political information just as an increased interactivity on social media platforms can enhance direct engagement between political actors and the electorate. Policymakers should implement guidelines to curb misinformation and promote fact-based political communication. Social media platforms should collaborate with electoral bodies to prevent the spread of misleading political content.

Keywords: Strategic Communication; Nigerian Political Campaigns; New Media; Messaging Strategies; Impact on Electoral Outcomes

I. Introduction

Political communication has always been a pivotal element in the democratic process, shaping how political messages are crafted, disseminated, and received by the electorate. In Nigeria, the evolution of political campaigning has been significantly influenced by technological advancements and the proliferation of new media platforms (Ademosu et al., 2025). This research explores the role of strategic communication in Nigerian political campaigns, emphasizing the impact of new media and messaging strategies on electoral outcomes.

Political communication in Nigeria has transitioned from traditional methods, such as print media, radio, and television, to a more dynamic and interactive approach driven by new media (Aondover & Ademosu, 2025). Historically, political campaigns relied heavily on rallies,

posters, and direct voter contact. However, the advent of digital technology and the internet has introduced new dimensions to political communication, enabling more immediate and widespread dissemination of information (Owen, 2019).

New media, encompassing social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp, along with blogs and online news portals, has revolutionized political communication. These platforms offer politicians unprecedented opportunities to engage directly with voters, bypassing traditional gatekeepers of information (Nwabueze & Ezebuenyi, 2019). The interactive nature of new media allows for real-time feedback and more personalized communication strategies, enhancing the ability to mobilize supporters and shape public opinion (Aondover & Obasi, 2025).

Strategic communication in political campaigns involves the deliberate and planned use of communication tools and techniques to achieve specific electoral objectives. This includes crafting persuasive messages, targeting specific voter demographics, and managing the overall narrative of the campaign (Holtzhausen & Zerfass, 2015). In the Nigerian context, strategic communication has become increasingly sophisticated, incorporating data analytics and voter behaviour studies to refine messaging strategies (Oni, 2017).

Effective messaging strategies are central to successful political campaigns. These strategies may focus on policy issues, candidate personas, or emotional appeals designed to resonate with the electorate. Nigerian political campaigns often employ a mix of these approaches, tailored to the cultural and socio-economic landscape of the country (Akinola, 2018). The use of new media amplifies these messages, allowing for greater reach and impact.

The impact of strategic communication on electoral outcomes in Nigeria cannot be overstated. Well-crafted and effectively disseminated messages can significantly influence voter perceptions and behaviours, potentially determining the success or failure of a campaign (Opeibi, 2019). The 2015 and 2019 general elections in Nigeria highlighted the growing importance of new media in shaping electoral outcomes, with social media playing a critical role in voter mobilization and engagement (Uwalaka & Watkins, 2018).

Despite the benefits, the use of new media in political communication also presents challenges, such as the spread of misinformation, cyber-attacks, and the digital divide, which can marginalize certain voter groups (Olukotun, 2017). However, it also offers opportunities for enhancing transparency, accountability, and participatory democracy by providing platforms for diverse voices and fostering greater political engagement (Okoro & Nwafor, 2016).

There is no arguing the position that the integration of new media and advanced messaging strategies has transformed how political campaigns are conducted, with significant implications for electoral outcomes. It is thus, hoped that this study will provide a comprehensive analysis of these trends, thus, contributing to the academic discourse on political communication and offering insights for practitioners and policymakers.

1.1 Problem Statement

The landscape of political communication in Nigeria is undergoing significant transformation due to the rapid proliferation of new media platforms. These changes have introduced both opportunities and challenges in how political campaigns are conducted, with profound implications for electoral outcomes.

Nigeria's political environment is characterized by its diversity, with over 250 ethnic groups and a multiplicity of languages, religions, and socio-economic backgrounds. This complexity necessitates sophisticated communication strategies to effectively reach and resonate with various segments of the electorate. Traditional media, such as newspapers, radio, and television, while still relevant, have been complemented and in some cases overshadowed by the rise of digital platforms. This shift has created a multifaceted media environment where the dynamics of political communication are continually evolving (Nwafor, 2020).

New media platforms, including social media, blogs, and online news outlets, have become pivotal in modern political campaigns (Mohammed & Aondover, 2025). These platforms offer immediacy, interactivity, and extensive reach, allowing political actors to engage with a broader audience more directly and personally. However, the influence of these platforms on political campaigns in Nigeria is not fully understood. While there is evidence that new media can enhance political participation and voter mobilization, the extent to which they impact electoral outcomes requires further exploration (Nwabueze & Ezebuenyi, 2019).

Strategic messaging is a critical component of political campaigns, involving the creation and dissemination of messages that are intended to persuade and mobilize voters. In Nigeria, political messaging must navigate a landscape fraught with ethnic, religious, and regional tensions (Maradun & Aondover, 2025). Crafting messages that appeal across these divides is a significant challenge. Moreover, the effectiveness of these messages in influencing voter behaviour and ultimately determining electoral outcomes is a complex phenomenon that has not been comprehensively studied (Opeibi, 2019).

While new media offers significant advantages, it also presents substantial challenges. The spread of misinformation and fake news, cyber-attacks, and the digital divide are critical issues that can undermine the democratic process. In Nigeria, where access to the internet and digital literacy levels vary widely, these challenges are particularly pronounced. Understanding how these factors influence the effectiveness of strategic communication in political campaigns is essential for developing more robust and resilient communication strategies (Olukotun, 2017; Aondover, 2024).

Despite the acknowledged importance of strategic communication and new media in political campaigns, there is a paucity of comprehensive studies examining their specific impacts in the Nigerian context. Most existing research tends to focus on isolated aspects, such as social media usage or voter behaviour, without integrating these elements into a cohesive framework that explains their interdependencies and collective impact on electoral outcomes (Owen, 2019).

The problem at hand is the insufficient understanding of the role of strategic communication in Nigerian political campaigns, especially in the context of new media and messaging strategies. This gap in knowledge hinders the development of effective communication strategies that can enhance democratic engagement and improve electoral outcomes. This research aims to fill this gap by providing a comprehensive analysis of how strategic communication, facilitated by new media, influences political campaigns and electoral results in Nigeria (Aondover et al., 2025).

II. Review of Literature

2.1 Historical Overview of Political Communication in Nigeria

Political communication in Nigeria has undergone significant transformations over time, evolving from traditional methods to the utilization of modern communication technologies and strategies. Understanding this historical trajectory provides insights into the dynamics of strategic communication in Nigerian political campaigns and its impact on electoral outcomes.

In the pre-colonial era, political communication in Nigeria relied on traditional methods such as oral storytelling, community gatherings, and indigenous media channels like town criers and local drummers (Nwabueze, 2015; Aondover et al., 2025). These forms of communication were integral to conveying messages from rulers, chiefs, and community leaders to the masses, shaping public opinion and mobilizing support.

With the advent of colonialism, the introduction of print media, including newspapers and pamphlets, revolutionized political communication in Nigeria. The colonial authorities used print media to disseminate information, propagate colonial ideologies, and control public discourse (Adekanye, 2016). However, indigenous newspapers like the West African Pilot and Nigerian Tribune emerged as platforms for nationalist agitation, fostering political awareness and mobilizing resistance against colonial rule.

Following Nigeria's independence in 1960, the government assumed control of broadcasting, establishing the Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation (NBC) as the primary medium for political communication (Olorunnisola, 2018). State-owned radio and television stations became instrumental in disseminating government messages, promoting national unity, and shaping public opinion. However, these outlets also faced criticisms for serving as mouthpieces for ruling regimes and stifling dissenting voices (Aondover et al., 2026).

The transition to multiparty democracy in 1999 ushered in a new era of political communication in Nigeria. Media deregulation and the proliferation of private broadcasting stations, newspapers, and online platforms expanded the landscape of political discourse (Ogunleye, 2017). Political parties and candidates utilized these diverse media channels to reach voters, disseminate campaign messages, and engage in electoral competition.

In recent years, the emergence of new media platforms, including social networking sites like Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp, has revolutionized political communication in Nigeria (Adisa & Madinga, 2020). Politicians and parties leverage these platforms to directly engage with voters, mobilize support, and shape public opinion. However, the use of new media also raises concerns about the spread of misinformation, hate speech, and the manipulation of online discourse.

The contemporary landscape of political communication in Nigeria is characterized by both challenges and opportunities. While new media technologies offer unprecedented avenues for citizen engagement and political participation, they also present challenges such as digital divides, regulatory gaps, and ethical concerns (Onapajo & Adegoke, 2021; Aondover et al., 2025). Navigating these complexities requires innovative strategies, ethical practices, and robust regulatory frameworks to ensure the integrity and effectiveness of political communication in Nigerian political campaigns.

2.2 Impact of Technological Advancements on the Evolution of Political Communication

Technological advancements have profoundly transformed the landscape of political communication globally, with new media platforms playing a pivotal role in shaping electoral processes and outcomes. The advent of new media, including social networking sites, blogs, and online news portals, has revolutionized political communication in Nigeria (Adebayo, 2016). These platforms provide unprecedented opportunities for political actors to engage directly with voters, mobilize support, and disseminate campaign messages in real-time.

Nigeria has witnessed significant growth in digital technologies and internet connectivity, driving the proliferation of new media platforms (Umar, 2019). Increased smartphone penetration and access to affordable mobile data have democratized access to information and political discourse, empowering citizens to participate actively in electoral processes. New media platforms have emerged as powerful tools for political mobilization and civic engagement in Nigeria (Olorunjuwon, 2020; Obasi & Msughter, 2023). Political parties and candidates leverage social media to rally supporters, organize campaign events, and solicit donations, thereby expanding their reach and influence among diverse voter demographics.

The rapid growth of new media has also amplified challenges related to disinformation and misinformation in Nigerian political campaigns (Aluko & Akinbode, 2017). The spread of fake news, rumours, and inflammatory content on social media platforms poses threats to the integrity of electoral processes and public trust in democratic institutions. Regulatory frameworks governing political communication in Nigeria are grappling with the complexities of new media (Obasi & Okorie, 2018). Efforts to curb the spread of disinformation and hate speech online have prompted debates about censorship, freedom of expression, and the need for ethical standards in digital politics. Strategic communication has emerged as a critical component of political campaigns in the new media era (Ojelade & Oluwole, 2021). Political actors employ sophisticated messaging strategies, targeted advertising, and data analytics to craft persuasive narratives and influence voter perceptions on digital platforms.

2.3 Analysis of Messaging Strategies in Nigerian Political Campaigns

Messaging strategies play a crucial role in Nigerian political campaigns, shaping voter perceptions, mobilizing support, and influencing electoral outcomes. Issue-based messaging involves highlighting policy proposals, governance priorities, and ideological platforms to appeal to voters' rational interests and concerns (Nwokorie & Nwosu, 2021; Okunade, 2025). Nigerian political campaigns often focus on critical issues such as security, corruption, infrastructure development, healthcare, and education. Candidates articulate their positions on these issues through speeches, debates, and campaign materials, aiming to demonstrate competence, credibility, and responsiveness to voter needs. Emotional appeals leverage sentiment, symbolism, and storytelling to evoke strong emotional responses from voters, such as hope, fear, pride, or empathy (Akinola & Oladeji, 2019). Nigerian political campaigns often employ emotional appeals to connect with voters on a personal and visceral level, tapping into cultural, religious, and socio-economic narratives (Sanusi et al., 2014). Emotional messaging strategies may include testimonials, personal anecdotes, imagery, music, and religious symbolism, aiming to inspire loyalty, enthusiasm, and solidarity among supporters.

Negative campaigning involves attacking opponents' character, record, or policies to undermine their credibility and sway voter perceptions (Ogaga, 2020). While negative campaigning is controversial, it is prevalent in Nigerian political contests, particularly during election cycles marked by intense competition and polarization. Negative messaging strategies may include mudslinging, character assassination, spreading rumours, and highlighting

opponents' alleged flaws, scandals, or failures. Despite ethical concerns, negative campaigning can be effective in shaping public opinion and influencing voter behaviour.

Review of Studies on Voter Behaviour and Factors Influencing Political Decision-Making in Nigerian Political Campaigns

Understanding voter behaviour and the factors influencing political decision-making is crucial for effective strategic communication in Nigerian political campaigns. Socio-demographic characteristics such as age, gender, education, income, ethnicity, and religion significantly influence voter behaviour in Nigerian political campaigns (Adetula & Ayodele, 2018). Studies have shown that factors such as education level and income are associated with higher political participation and engagement, while ethnicity and religion often shape voting patterns and party preferences (Michael & Kayode, 2014). Political socialization processes, including family, education, media, and peer influence, play a significant role in shaping voter attitudes, values, and party loyalties in Nigeria (Nwanegbo & Ezeani, 2020). Studies have highlighted the importance of early exposure to political information and social networks in fostering party identification and voter loyalty.

Economic conditions, unemployment, poverty, infrastructure development, and social welfare policies are significant factors influencing voter perceptions and decision-making in Nigerian political campaigns (Okeke & Ezeani, 2019). Studies have highlighted the importance of addressing socio-economic grievances and delivering tangible benefits to constituents in winning electoral support. Media exposure, including traditional and new media platforms, shapes voter perceptions, attitudes, and decision-making processes in Nigerian political campaigns (Nwosu & Ojelade, 2021). Studies have examined the impact of media framing, agenda-setting, and political advertising on voter behaviour, highlighting the role of strategic communication strategies in shaping electoral outcomes.

Trust in political institutions, including government, political parties, and electoral bodies, influences voter confidence and electoral participation in Nigeria (Akintunde & Olumide, 2017). Studies have examined the impact of trust on voter turnout, political engagement, and electoral legitimacy, emphasizing the importance of transparency, accountability, and integrity in democratic governance (Okunade, 2025).

How Strategic Communication Shapes Voter Perceptions and Preferences in Nigerian Political Campaigns

Strategic communication plays a pivotal role in shaping voter perceptions and preferences in Nigerian political campaigns, encompassing both traditional and new media platforms. Traditional media, including television, radio, newspapers, and magazines, remain influential sources of political information in Nigeria (Adegoke & Onapajo, 2018). Political parties and candidates utilize traditional media platforms to disseminate campaign messages, conduct interviews, and participate in debates, shaping voter perceptions through mass communication channels. New media platforms, such as social networking sites, blogs, and online forums, have emerged as powerful tools for voter engagement and mobilization in Nigerian political campaigns (Ojelade & Oluwole, 2021). Political actors leverage new media to reach diverse audiences, foster interactive communication, and mobilize support through personalized messaging and targeted outreach efforts.

Messaging strategies, including issue-based messaging, emotional appeals, and negative campaigning, are employed to influence voter perceptions and preferences in Nigerian political campaigns (Nwokorie & Nwosu, 2021). Candidates craft persuasive messages tailored to resonate with voter interests, values, and socio-economic concerns, aiming to sway electoral choices and garner support. Strategic communication fosters interactive communication and feedback loops between political actors and voters, enabling real-time engagement and dialogue (Adisa & Madinga, 2020). Candidates solicit feedback, respond to inquiries, and address voter concerns through new media platforms, enhancing transparency, accessibility, and accountability in political discourse. Strategic communication involves perception management and image-building efforts aimed at shaping candidates' public image and reputation (Olutokun & Adebayo, 2019). Political actors use traditional and new media platforms to cultivate a favorable perception, project competence, and differentiate themselves from competitors, influencing voter preferences and electoral outcomes.

2.4 Overview of the Role of Social Media in Political Campaigns Worldwide

Social media has revolutionized political communication globally, becoming a powerful tool for political campaigns to engage with voters, mobilize support, and shape public opinion. Social media platforms, including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube, offer political campaigns unprecedented reach and accessibility to diverse audiences (Howard & Hussain, 2018). Political actors leverage social media to connect directly with voters, disseminate campaign messages, and mobilize supporters, bypassing traditional media gatekeepers and geographical barriers. Social media facilitates interactive communication and engagement between political actors and citizens, fostering dialogue, feedback, and participation (Boulianne, 2019; Guanah et al., 2026). Through live streams, town halls, Q&A sessions, and online polls, political campaigns solicit input, address concerns, and mobilize grassroots support, enhancing voter engagement and democratic participation.

Social media enables real-time information dissemination and news sharing, shaping the agenda-setting dynamics and framing of political discourse (Tsfati & Cappella, 2018). Political campaigns leverage social media to react swiftly to breaking news, counter opposition narratives, and shape public opinion on critical issues, influencing voter perceptions and electoral outcomes. Social media platforms offer sophisticated targeting tools and data analytics capabilities, enabling political campaigns to personalize messages and micro-target specific voter segments (Stier & Bleich, 2020). By leveraging demographic, geographic, and psychographic data, political actors tailor content to resonate with diverse audiences, optimizing campaign effectiveness and voter persuasion (Joseph & Okunade, 2026). Social media platforms also pose challenges such as the spread of misinformation, disinformation, and online manipulation tactics (Guess et al., 2019). Political campaigns grapple with the proliferation of fake news, echo chambers, and algorithmic biases, necessitating strategies to combat digital misinformation and safeguard the integrity of political communication.

Discussion of the Digital Divide and Its Implications for the Accessibility of New Media in Nigeria

The digital divide refers to the gap between individuals and communities that have access to information and communication technologies (ICTs), such as the internet and mobile phones, and those who do not. In the context of Nigeria, the digital divide poses significant challenges to the accessibility of new media platforms for political communication and engagement (Okunade et al., 2024). Despite the increasing penetration of mobile phones and internet connectivity in Nigeria, disparities in internet access persist across urban-rural divides, socio-economic strata,

and geographical regions (Oluwole & Akanle, 2017). Urban areas and wealthier households tend to have greater access to high-speed internet, while rural communities and marginalized populations face challenges of infrastructure limitations, affordability constraints, and unreliable connectivity. Mobile phones serve as primary devices for accessing the internet and engaging with new media platforms in Nigeria (Ojelade & Olutokun, 2020). While mobile phone ownership is widespread, disparities exist in smartphone ownership, data affordability, and mobile internet usage patterns. Low-income earners and individuals in rural areas are more likely to rely on feature phones with limited internet capabilities, constraining their access to new media content and political communication channels (Aondover et al., 2025).

The digital divide in Nigeria is exacerbated by disparities in digital literacy and skills, with marginalized populations lacking the necessary knowledge and competencies to navigate new media platforms effectively (Adegoke & Onapajo, 2021). Limited access to quality education, training programs, and ICT infrastructure hinders individuals' ability to critically evaluate online content, participate in digital discourse, and engage meaningfully in political communication. Gender disparities further compound the digital divide in Nigeria, with women facing barriers to internet access, digital literacy, and participation in online spaces (Ogunleye & Aina, 2019). Sociocultural norms, economic constraints, and lack of empowerment contribute to women's limited access to new media platforms, constraining their participation in political discourse and electoral processes (Aondover et al., 2022). The digital divide poses significant implications for political communication and electoral engagement in Nigeria. While new media platforms offer opportunities for political actors to reach and mobilize voters, disparities in access and connectivity limit the inclusivity and effectiveness of digital campaign strategies. Addressing the digital divide requires comprehensive policies and initiatives aimed at bridging infrastructure gaps, promoting digital literacy, and fostering equitable access to ICTs for all citizens.

2.5 Analysis of Ethical Considerations in Political Messaging

Ethical considerations are paramount in political messaging, particularly in the context of Nigerian political campaigns where strategic communication can significantly impact electoral outcomes. Truthfulness is a fundamental ethical principle in political communication, emphasizing the importance of honesty and accuracy in conveying information to voters (Kiouisis et al., 2019). Political actors have a moral obligation to provide truthful and verifiable information to the electorate, avoiding false or misleading statements that could undermine public trust and confidence in the electoral process. However, the prevalence of misinformation and disinformation in Nigerian political campaigns poses challenges to truthfulness, highlighting the need for fact-checking mechanisms and accountability measures. Fairness entails treating all political actors and viewpoints impartially and providing equitable access to communication channels and platforms (Strömbäck & Kiouisis, 2017). Political campaigns should strive to maintain fairness and balance in their messaging strategies, avoiding bias, manipulation, and favoritism. However, concerns arise regarding the manipulation of media coverage, censorship, and partisan framing, which can undermine fairness and distort public discourse in Nigerian political campaigns.

Transparency requires political actors to disclose their intentions, affiliations, and sources of funding in their communication efforts (Chadwick & Stromer-Galley, 2021). Transparency fosters accountability, integrity, and public trust in political messaging, enabling voters to make informed decisions. In Nigerian political campaigns, transparency is essential for combating corruption, promoting electoral integrity, and safeguarding democratic norms. The advent of new media platforms introduces ethical dilemmas regarding privacy, data manipulation, and algorithmic bias in political messaging (Tufekci, 2017). Political campaigns often collect and

utilize voter data for targeted messaging, raising concerns about privacy infringement and consent. Moreover, algorithmic algorithms may amplify divisive content and filter out opposing viewpoints, exacerbating polarization and undermining democratic deliberation in Nigerian political campaigns.

Effective regulatory frameworks and enforcement mechanisms are essential for upholding ethical standards in political messaging and holding violators accountable (Norris et al., 2020). Governments, electoral commissions, and civil society organizations in Nigeria must establish clear guidelines, regulations, and oversight mechanisms to monitor and regulate political communication practices. Enforcement of ethical standards ensures fairness, transparency, and integrity in Nigerian political campaigns, safeguarding the democratic process.

2.6 Theoretical Review

In examining the role of strategic communication in Nigerian political campaigns, it is essential to ground the analysis in relevant theoretical frameworks. Two pertinent theories are the Agenda-Setting Theory and the Uses and Gratifications Theory. These theories provide a foundation for understanding how media influences public opinion and behaviour, and how individuals actively engage with media content.

2.7 Agenda-Setting Theory

The Agenda-Setting Theory, first proposed by McCombs and Shaw in 1972, posits that the media play a crucial role in shaping public perception by highlighting certain issues over others. This theory suggests that the topics emphasized by the media become the topics that the public perceives as most important (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). Within the parlance of Nigerian political campaigns, this theory helps to explain how strategic communication through new media can shape the political agenda and influence voter priorities.

Akinola (2018) applied the agenda-setting theory to examine the role of social media in the 2015 and 2019 Nigerian elections. The study found that social media platforms, through strategic communication efforts by political actors, successfully set the public agenda by emphasizing specific campaign issues, such as corruption, security, and economic development. These issues became focal points in public discussions and influenced voter decision-making processes.

Another study by Opeibi (2019) explored how political campaigns in Nigeria use social media to set the agenda and shape electoral discourse. The research highlighted that social media campaigns could rapidly disseminate key messages and mobilize public support by keeping certain issues at the forefront of the public's mind. This capability allowed political actors to control the narrative and influence voter perceptions and behaviours.

2.8 Uses and Gratifications Theory

The Uses and Gratifications Theory, developed by Blumler and Katz in the 1970s, suggests that individuals actively seek out media that meets their specific needs and desires. This theory emphasizes the agency of media users in choosing content that satisfies their information, entertainment, personal identity, and social integration needs (Blumler & Katz, 1974). In respect of Nigerian political campaigns, the theory is useful for understanding how voters engage with political content on new media platforms and how these engagements influence their electoral decisions.

Nwabueze and Ezebuenyi (2019) applied the uses and gratifications theory to study how Nigerian voters use social media during political campaigns. The research found that voters primarily engaged with political content on social media to gain information about candidates, express their political views, and connect with like-minded individuals. The study concluded that the effectiveness of political campaigns on social media depends on their ability to meet these user needs, thus influencing voter attitudes and behaviours.

Another study by Uwalaka and Watkins (2018) further explored how Nigerian political actors use social media to fulfill the diverse needs of their audience. The research highlighted that successful political campaigns strategically tailor their messages to cater to the informational, emotional, and social needs of their target demographics. By doing so, they enhance voter engagement and support.

III. Research Method

3.1 Research Design

To achieve the research objective, a quantitative method approach was employed as the research method. This approach allows for a comprehensive and multifaceted analysis of the research topic, capturing diverse perspectives and data sources. Determining the population of the study for the research requires considering the scope of the research topic and the objectives of the study. Since the research topic is employing the quantitative research design, the population was multifaceted and included various groups and entities involved in Nigerian political campaigns.

The choice of sampling technique for the study depended on various factors including the research objectives, the nature of the population, and the available resources. For the purpose of this study, the Purposive and Convenience sampling techniques were deployed to select participants who possess specific characteristics or experiences relevant to the research topic. For example, political candidates, campaign strategists, media professionals, and key stakeholders were purposively sampled based on their involvement in Nigerian political campaigns.

The Snowball sampling technique was also employed to identify additional participants through referrals from initial respondents or contacts within the political communication network. Snowball sampling is particularly useful for accessing hard-to-reach populations or individuals with specialized knowledge.

Sampling size determination involves considerations of statistical power, representativeness, and practical constraints. For the purpose of this study, the researcher had conveniently picked a figure of 380 respondents for the quantitative survey. Access to the required sample frames that could help a statistical collation of the sample size collation seems impracticable at this time due to improper logistics and time constraints hence, the decision taken.

A variety of data collection methods was employed to gather comprehensive insights for this study however, the following methods were adopted for the research. The Quantitative Data Collection Method employed the administration of a structured questionnaire to a representative sample of registered voters/social media users/media professionals to help in data

collection towards their exposure to campaign messages, perceptions of political candidates, preferences for communication channels, and intended voting behaviours.

For this study, the research instrument deployed the quantitative method. For the quantitative research instrument, a structured Survey Questionnaire was designed to collect quantitative data from a representative sample of relevant stakeholders related to strategic communication in Nigerian political campaigns.

IV. Result and Discussion

This chapter presents the findings from the data collected through surveys regarding the examination of the role of strategic communication in Nigerian political campaigns. The survey results provide quantitative insights into the perceptions and attitudes of the audience towards the role of strategic communication in Nigerian political campaigns. This method provides a comprehensive understanding of the role of strategic communication in Nigerian political campaigns.

Table 1. Primary Source of Political Information of the Respondents

SOURCE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGES%
TELEVISION	35	11.6%
RADIO	28	9.3%
NEWSPAPERS	55	18.2%
SOCIAL MEDIA	113	37.4%
ONLINE NEWS WEBSITES	46	15.2%
FRIENDS/FAMILY	18	6%
PUBLIC RALLIES OR MEETINGS	4	1.3%
OTHERS	3	1%
TOTAL	302	100%

Source: Google Forms, 2024

Table 2 shows the primary sources of political information for the respondents, with the majority of them stating social media as their primary source of information (37.4%), 18.2% using newspapers, 15.2% using online news websites, 11.6% using television, 9.3% using radio, 6% relying on family and friends, 1.3% relying on public rallies or meetings, and the remaining 1% relying on other sources.

Table 2. Political Affiliation of the Respondents

POLITICAL AFFILIATION	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGES%
APC	38	12.6%
PDP	74	24.5%
LP	121	40.1%
NNPP	30	9.9%
OTHER	10	3.3%
PREFER NOT TO SAY	5	1.7%
TOTAL	302	100%

Source: Google Forms, 2024

Table 2 shows the political affiliations of the respondents, with 40.1% supporting LP, 24.5% supporting PDP, 12.6% supporting APC, 9.9% supporting NNPP, and 3.3% supporting other parties.

Table 3. Level of Political Engagement of the Respondents

POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGES%
VERY ACTIVE	76	25.1%
MODERATELY ACTIVE	148	48.8%
SLIGHTLY ACTIVE	52	17.2%
NOT ACTIVE	27	8.9%
TOTAL	303	100%

Source: Google Forms, 2024

Table 3 shows the level of political engagement of the respondents, with 48.8% being moderately active, 25.1% being very active, 17.2% being slightly active, and 8.9% being inactive.

Table 4. How important do you think strategic communication is in political campaigns?

IMPORTANCE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGES%
VERY IMPORTANT	85	28.3%
IMPORTANT	111	37%
NEUTRAL	80	26.7%
NOT IMPORTANT	20	6.7%
NOT IMPORTANT AT ALL	4	1.3%
TOTAL	300	100%

Source: Google Forms, 2024

Table 4 shows that 37% of the respondents think strategic communication is important, 28.3% of them think strategic communication is very important, 26.7% are neutral about it, 6.7% think it's not important and 1.3% think it's not important at all.

Table 5. What improvements do you think are needed for more effective use of new media in political campaigns?

IMPROVEMENTS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE%
BETTER REGULATIONS AND OVERSIGHTS	60	19.9%
IMPROVED DIGITAL LITERACY AMONG THE ELECTORATE	117	38.9%
ENHANCED CYBER-SECURITY MEASURES	78	25.9%
MORE AUTHENTIC AND TRANSPARENT COMMUNICATION	35	11.6%
REDUCTION OF MISINFORMATION AND FAKE NEWS	11	3.7%
TOTAL	301	100%

Based on the table above, 38.9% of the respondents believe that the most important improvement would be improved digital literacy among the electorate, followed by enhanced cyber security measures (25.9%), then better regulations and oversight (19.9%), then more authentic and transparent communication (11.6%), and the least important being education of misinformation and fake news (3.7%).

4.1 Discussion of Findings

The findings indicate that strategic communication, particularly through digital platforms, plays a crucial role in political engagement. The dominance of social media as a primary information source and the effectiveness of emotional appeals highlights evolving trends in voter influence. However, the mixed responses regarding political messaging effectiveness suggest that further improvements are needed to enhance relatability and trust.

The above analysis indicated that the high percentage (65.3%) of respondents acknowledging the importance of strategic communication aligns with Uwalaka and Watkins (2018), who found that messaging strategies significantly impact voter behavior, just as the emphasis on message consistency (46.9%) and clarity (26.4%) in the analysis supports Opeibi (2019), who highlighted that personalized and issue-based messaging were effective in building voter loyalty.

Findings that strategic communication influences voter behavior to some (42.1%) or a great extent (21.2%) reinforce Nwafor (2020), who demonstrated that social media strategies significantly increased youth voter mobilization. Similarly, Nwabueze and Ezebuenyi (2019) noted that political discourse shaped by social media had a substantial impact on public opinion, which is in line with the findings that political messaging effectiveness remains contested (neutral – 36.2%, effective – 33.6%).

Issue of the effectiveness of communication channels and new media use noted that the analysis shows that newspapers (29.1%), television (25.2%), and social media (22.8%) are leading communication channels, aligning with Opeibi (2019), who found that a mix of traditional and digital media was essential for campaign success. The finding that Instagram (36.6%) and Twitter (30.4%) dominate political engagement resonates with Nwafor (2020), who identified these platforms as pivotal for mobilizing young voters. The preference for new media over traditional media (57.6%) corresponds with Owen (2019), who noted that digital platforms improved transparency and accountability.

On the nature of political messaging and engagement, the result showing that personal stories (30.7%) and campaign promises (30%) dominate political content aligns with Uwalaka and Watkins (2018), who found that socio-economic issues and personal narratives influenced voter behavior. The high level of interactivity on social media (41% interactive, 25.7% very active) matches Nwabueze and Ezebuenyi (2019), who demonstrated that interactive digital campaigns were effective in shaping political discourse.

Findings on influence of emotional and issue-based messaging noted that emotional appeal (39.4%) and issue-based messaging (24.2%) are the most compelling strategies which supports Uwalaka and Watkins (2018), who noted that anti-corruption efforts and socio-economic concerns resonated most with voters. Olukotun (2017) also emphasized how misinformation could distort voter perceptions, reinforcing the importance of clarity and consistency in political messaging.

The dominance of young adults (25-34 years) in the survey (40.3%) aligns with Nwafor (2020), who identified young voters as the primary demographic engaging with digital political campaigns, just as the study's findings on social media preference over traditional media further validate Opeibi (2019) and Owen (2019), who showed that digital strategies were more effective in political campaigns.

The analysis strongly aligns with empirical studies, reinforcing the growing importance of strategic communication, particularly through digital platforms, in Nigerian political campaigns. New media has overtaken traditional channels in terms of effectiveness, while emotional and issue-based messaging remains crucial for voter engagement. Additionally, the role of misinformation, as identified in previous research, underscores the need for message consistency and clarity in political communication.

V. Conclusion

This study underscores the critical role of strategic communication in Nigerian political campaigns, particularly through digital platforms. The findings reveal that a well-educated and economically diverse electorate, predominantly middle-aged and self-employed, engages actively in political discourse. With social media emerging as the primary source of political information, platforms such as Instagram and Twitter have become pivotal in mobilizing and influencing voters, especially young adults.

The study highlights that message consistency and clarity significantly impact voter behavior, reinforcing the effectiveness of emotional and issue-based messaging. Additionally, new media is increasingly preferred over traditional communication channels, demonstrating its growing influence on political engagement. While political messaging effectiveness remains contested, the emphasis on strategic communication suggests that clarity, consistency, and engagement are essential for fostering voter trust and participation.

Overall, the research confirms that digital media has reshaped political communication in Nigeria, driving electoral engagement and shaping public opinion. As political campaigns continue to evolve, integrating strategic messaging with digital platforms will be crucial in enhancing voter outreach and influencing electoral outcomes.

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