

EFFECTS OF THE SOCIAL MEDIA IN THE MARKETING OF POLITICAL CANDIDATES IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT: *Social media are new information network and information technology using a form of communication utilizing interactive and user-produced content, and interpersonal relationships are created and maintained. More recently, the prominence of social media has been particularly highlighted in politics, given the fact that the use of social networking sites (Facebook) and micro blogging services (Twitter) are believed to have the potential of positively influencing political participation. The use of social media platforms are important tools within political communication campaigns to secure victory and encourage interaction between political parties/candidates and voters, and most times to portray positive image of the political candidates. Incidentally, in Nigeria, the everyday use of social media by politicians, and the manner in which the user-citizen interacts with the social network sites/pages of politicians has received rather less attention. Essentially, politicians expect the communication relationship to be positive and of benefit to them, thus, political gladiators of all shades of opinions, ideologies, intents and goals use the media with the belief that political communication through them might exert pressure or influence on people's perception and behaviours and this has given rise to both ethical and unethical political communication and desperate political contenders manifesting bad governance, thereby, leading to social and economic infrastructural neglect and security of lives and property. The main objective of the study is to determine the effect of social media in projecting the image of political candidate in Nigeria. The research adopted the descriptive survey design. The population of the study comprises of the masses [i.e. the electorate] and the members of political parties (political candidates) in Nigeria who uses social media. Primary data and secondary sources of information were employed. Data were tested using simple percentages, Pearson Moment Correlation Coefficient and Regression analyses at 0.05 level of significance. Findings from the study showed that: There is a significant positive relationship between usage of Facebook as an awareness social media tool and projection of a political candidates' image in Nigeria ($r = 0.764$; $F = 418.677$; $p < 0.05$). Blogging as a credible social media tool to a large extent influences image of a political candidate in Nigeria ($r = 0.728$; $p < 0.05$). It was concluded that social media serve as credible tools and are capable of influencing the image of political candidates in Nigeria. The study therefore recommended that political candidates should carefully plan and execute communication strategies using various social media tools, so as to fully enjoy the inherent benefits of the social media tools (i.e credibility and awareness).*

KEYWORDS: Social Media, Cognitive Response Theory, Expectancy Violation Theory and Source Credibility Theory

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

The internet has made new systems reachable to organizations such as the social media (Hajli, 2013; Okolo and Ehikwe, 2015). The world has transformed dramatically as a result of the evolution of the social media of communication (Wang, Chen and Liang, 2011). It has removed the barriers of communication by decentralizing communication such that almost everybody can voice out and participate in many issues affecting them in the society (Amedie, 2015). It has a significant role in changing people's lives in the society (Siddiqui and Singh, 2016). In recent times, social media have become an integral part of public discourse and communication in the contemporary society. The fast development of social media has caused major changes pertaining the way people find groups of individuals with similar interests, the nature of information, the available news sources, or the possibility to require and share ideas (Stieglitz, Dang-Xuan, 2012). It has had major effects on fields such as advertising, public relations, communications, and political communication (Husain, Abdullah, Ishak, Kamarudin, Robani, Mohin & Hassan 2014). More recently, the prominence of social media has been particularly highlighted in politics, given the fact that the use of social networking sites (Facebook) and micro blogging services (Twitter) are believed to have the potential of positively influencing political participation (Stieglitz, Dang-Xuan, 2012).

“The use of social media platforms are important tools within political communication campaigns to secure victory and encourage interaction between political parties/candidates and voters, and most times to portray positive image of the political candidates” (Austin, 2008). Social media are new information network and information technology using a form of communication utilizing interactive and user-produced content, and interpersonal relationships are created and maintained. Typical social media network services could be content sharing, web communities, and Internet forums (Austin, 2008). Acheaw and Larson (2015) revealed in their study that social media has a strong relationship with the performance of the students.

Faced with a sharp decline in party membership and a more demanding, assertive and distrustful public increasingly willing to intervene directly in the political process (often through the use of digital media-enabled personalized forms of participation), political parties and candidates embraced new online tools as part of their campaign communication (Gibson, 2013). Social networking sites like Facebook, micro blogs like Twitter and video-sharing sites like YouTube have not only given politicians a powerful avenue for interacting with a more demanding citizenry, but also have allowed them to offer more personalized images to the public and have given less resourceful parties the opportunity to match well-funded campaigns in sophistication, using creative and relatively inexpensive strategies (Gibson, 2013). Through social networking sites, political organizations and candidates have not only the possibility to directly communicate with their publics, but also to interact with them (two-way communication).

A Political candidate is a person seeking or being considered for some kind of position; for example: to be elected to an office — in this case a candidate selection procedure occurs. In the context of elections for public office in a representational partisan democracy, a candidate who has been selected by a political party is normally said to be the nominee of that party. The party's selection (that is, the nomination) is typically accomplished either based on one or more primary elections according to the rules of the party and any applicable election laws (Wikipedia, 2016). Candidates also may be described as "incumbents", if they are already

serving in the office for which they are seeking re-election or "challengers", if they are seeking to unseat an incumbent.

In this era of social media, the demand for a public relations function based on direct and trust-based communication with publics for better relationship building is great (Breakenridge, 2008). At the same time, the emergence of social media can also provide one of the best venues for new public relations (Breakenridge, 2008; Scott, 2007; Weil, 2006), which can function as the hub of dialogic, participatory communications between publics and organizations. In either case, garnering credibility from publics is essential.

Instead of being passive recipients of messages, publics are now active enough to select communication channels, especially when they care about an issue (Rubin, 2002). Unlike traditional media such as radio or television, the use of social media by individuals is increasingly becoming "instrumental", depending on their motivations for communication (functionality), purposive or planned nature of communicating (intentionality), communication choice (selectivity), and involvement with media. Given such audience selective and active media use, communication without the creation and cultivation of credibility for better public engagement or brand-building can be hardly effective (Holtz & Havens, 2009).

In truism, politicians in Nigeria and most developing world insists on carrying out political jingles and other advertising campaign on the traditional media-TV, radio, billboard, newspapers, and magazines instead of adopting the newest social media (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, Reddit, Pinterest etc) to market a political candidate and also a political party. Majority of the Nigerians now own android phones, I-pads, I-phones, blackberry phones or a PC to do many of their communications and transactions online. The reason behind this "**Communication Myopia**" is best known to them, but the fact still remains that this social media networks is the trend and any politician and political party that really want to target a profitable and viable audience must key into it. That is the only way of achieving success in this millennium's many electioneering campaigns. Also, the youths are the future leaders of tomorrow and because they perceive the image of politicians as bad, the social media is urgently needed to change their attitudes and worldview. So, this study is aimed at filling this gap in the use of the traditional media as against the new media; the social media to market a political candidate and also a political party. In the light of the above therefore, the researchers seek to determine the effect of social media in projecting the image of a political candidate.

Statement of the Problem

Social media has served as a specialized platform of modern human communication and is now part of the political culture of most democratic nations across the globe, Nigeria inclusive. Usage of social media is one of the most dominant forms of communication between politicians and the electorate; and it is massively and strategically exploited by the politicians across the globe to achieve their targeted goals as regard projecting positive images, retaining offices, and maintaining relationships with their publics. Social media (Internet, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, SMS, E-mail, You tube) have being useful in aiding exchange of information between the political candidates and electorate; it helps citizens to be informed and influence their political choices, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviour towards certain political candidates.

Incidentally, in Nigeria, the everyday use of social media by politicians, and the manner in which

the user-citizen interacts with the social network sites/pages of politicians has received rather less attention. Essentially, politicians expect the communication relationship to be positive and of benefit to them, thus, political gladiators of all shades of opinions, ideologies, intents and goals use the media with the belief that political communication through them might exert pressure or influence on people's perception and behaviours. This conception of the effect of social media is akin to the historical and cultural dominance of print and electronic media and the perceived hypodermic /needle effect of mass media messages. In view of the perceived impact of the media whether from the 'maximalists' or 'minimalists' perspective, profit driven mentality of competition for political space has given rise to both ethical and unethical political communication using all available platforms of interpersonal and mass communication.

However, there is serious need for better political information, education, and enlightenment, through adequate and effective/ efficient social media, handled by relevant professionals with strong adherence to their professional ethics and code of conduct, wealthy in experience. The political advert messages should be based on truth and full information that will enable the electorate make wise and better decision that will help to bring the right people into governance. This is because, as many believe, the development of a country is not only on the conduct of good elections but on the acceptance of a favourable candidate and party with great ideology and programmes to govern the masses. If this needful is not taken into cognizance and made the norm, there is no doubt of experiencing desperate political contenders that will manifest with bad governance, thereby, leading to social and economic infrastructural neglect and security of lives and property.

In the light of the foregoing therefore, the researchers seek to determine the effect of social media in projecting the image of political candidate in Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study were to:

1. Examine the nature of relationship between usage of Facebook as an awareness social media tool and projection of image of political candidates in Nigeria.
2. Determine the extent to which blogging as a credible social media tool influences the image of political candidates in Nigeria.

Research Questions

1. What is the nature of relationship between usage of Facebook as an awareness social media tool and projection of image of political candidates in Nigeria?
2. To what extent does blogging as a credible social media tool influence the image of political candidates in Nigeria?

Research Hypotheses

1. There is a significant positive relationship between usage of Facebook as an awareness social media tool and projection of image of political candidates in Nigeria.
2. Blogging as a credible social media tool to a large extent positively influences image of political candidate in Nigeria.

Significance of the Study

Firstly, this study will be of great benefit to Nigerian politicians and prospective politicians as it would unravel the importance of using social media tools to achieve success in during and after elections, helping project images and creating awareness especially among the younger generations.

Secondly, this study will be relevant to political managers and media consultants of political candidates as well as campaign managers as it will help them to know and appreciate the gains and efficacy of using social media tools and how best to handle it for projecting the image of their clients and increasing awareness of the political candidates.

Finally, this study will be of great benefit to researchers and other seekers of knowledge in this wide field of learning, as it will contribute to the existing literature on usefulness of social media in politics.

Scope of the Study

The study centers on the effect of the social media in projecting the image of a political candidate in Nigeria.

Operational Definition of Terms

Political Candidate: This is the person seeking or being considered for some kind of political position.

Social Media: Social media is the collective of online communications channels dedicated to community-based input, interaction, content-sharing and collaboration.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Concept of Social Media

Social media is the collective of online communications channels dedicated to community-based input, interaction, content-sharing and collaboration. Websites and applications dedicated to forums, micro blogging, social networking, social bookmarking, social curation, and wikis are among the different types of social media.

Social media can be defined as a collection of internet-based applications that expand the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0 and that permit the creation and exchange of user-generated content (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Social networking sites are the interface between people and social media, and for many the “Internet” is synonymous with social networking sites (Hinton & Hjorth, 2013). One of the most interesting characteristic of social media is represented by the term “user-generated content”, which refers to different forms of media content, publicly available and created by end users (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Therefore, people use social media not only to consume online information, but also to produce unique content themselves (Gil de Zuniga, Molyneux, & Zheng, 2014), transforming from content “consumers” to content “producers”.

Facebook is a social networking site founded in 2004, by Marck Zuckerberg, with the purpose of being used by Harvard students. Rapidly, it gained worldwide popularity, and today Facebook represents the most used social networking site, with over 1 billion users worldwide (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Twitter is a micro blogging platform that enables users to read and send short text-messages, keeping its service simple, by limiting the length of the updates to 140 characters. Compared to the more private environment provided by Facebook, most messages on Twitter are public and searchable, as the main feature of Twitter is the hashtag, which allows content organization by categorizing information (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

Prominent examples of social media

Most of the common examples of social media tools include (Wikipedia, 2016):

- Facebook: is a popular free social networking website that allows registered users to create profiles, upload photos and video, send messages and keep in touch with friends, family and colleagues. According to statistics from the Nielsen Group, Internet users within the United States spend more time on Facebook than any other website.
- Twitter: is a free micro blogging service that allows registered members to broadcast short posts called tweets. Twitter members can broadcast tweets and follow other users' tweets by using multiple platforms and devices.
- Google+ : is Google's social networking project, designed to replicate the way people interact offline more closely than is the case in other social networking services. The project's slogan is "Real-life sharing rethought for the web."
- Wikipedia: is a free, open content online encyclopedia created through the collaborative effort of a community of users known as Wikipedians. Anyone registered on the site can create an article for publication; registration is not required to edit articles. Wikipedia was founded in January of 2001.
- LinkedIn: is a social networking site designed specifically for the business community. The goal of the site is to allow registered members to establish and document networks of people they know and trust professionally.
- Reddit: is a social news website and forum where stories are socially curated and promoted by site members. The site is composed of hundreds of sub-communities, known as "subreddits." Each subreddit has a specific topic such as technology, politics or music. Reddit site members, also known as, "redditors," submit content which is then voted upon by other members. The goal is to send well-regarded stories to the top of the site's main thread page.
- Pinterest: is a social curation website for sharing and categorizing images found online. Pinterest requires brief descriptions but the main focus of the site is visual. Clicking on an image will take you to the original source, so, for example, if you click on a picture of a pair of shoes, you might be taken to a site where you can purchase them. An image of blueberry pancakes might take you to the recipe; a picture of a whimsical birdhouse might take you to the instructions.

Characteristics of Social Media

Social media is best understood as a group of new kinds of online media, which share most or all of the following characteristics (Wikipedia, 2016):

- Participation social media encourages contributions and feedback from everyone who is interested. It blurs the line between media and audience.
- Openness most social media services are open to feedback and participation. They encourage voting, comments and the sharing of information. There are rarely any barriers to accessing and making use of content – password-protected content is frowned on.
- Conversation whereas traditional media is about “broadcast” (content transmitted or distributed to an audience) social media is better seen as a two-way conversation.
- Community social media allows communities to form quickly and communicate effectively. Communities share common interests, such as a love of photography

Social Media as a Tool of Communication for Political Candidates

Social media offers a variety of avenues through which political candidates can communicate with people. In fact, social media is known to have been used widely by politicians to either create awareness or to make people see them as accessible and credible (Austin, 2008). Over the last 30 years the nature of communication has undergone a substantial change and it is still changing. Email has had a profound effect on the way people keep in touch. Politicians in recent times have used this means to reach out to their audience, creating impressions which they believe would be favourable to them. Using emails, communications are shorter and more frequent than when letters were the norm and response time has greatly diminished. Instant messaging has created another method of interaction, one where the length of messages is shorter and the style of the interaction is more conversational (Goldstein and Freedman, 2002). Broadcast technologies like Twitter transform these short bursts of communication from one-on-one conversations to little news (or trivia) programs: which we can tune in whenever we want an update or have something to say.

Online communication tools also have the potential to increase our awareness of the movements of our professional or social contacts. Twitter, for instance, offers us an update of things people we know happen to be doing at a particular point of time. This phenomenon has been referred as social proprioception by Thompson (2007), named after the physical quality of proprioception that tells a creature where its extremities are by the reception of stimuli produced within the organism. Social proprioception tells us where the nodes of our community are and provides a sense of connectedness to and awareness of others without direct communication. Internet is the third place where people connect with friends, build a sense of togetherness. Increasingly, a computer with an Internet connection is the locus of a range of interactions in a variety of media and a gateway to an array of social spaces for work and play.

Social networking sites like Facebook and MySpace and virtual environments like Second Life and World of War craft have become online meeting spaces where users— members, residents, or players—can interact and express themselves. They offer a way to keep in touch with existing communities that users belong to offline, such as social and professional groups. They also make it possible for people who would not normally communicate more than a few times

a year to keep in touch— politicians could interact with their teeming supporters on a daily basis, giving their supporters a sense of belonging through the online community itself. Sites like YouTube and Flickr represent another forum for online communication that is centered on sharing, preference, and popular culture. Whether it is as simple as checking back to see what other comments have been added to yours or as involved as attending a workshop or presentation in a virtual world, the nature of the attraction lies in the connections between people that these online spaces afford.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Cognitive Response Theory

Cognitive Response Theory stemmed from many studies and psychological theories that began in the 1930's about attitude changes (Eagly and Shelly, 2004). Parts of the theories on attitude were blended in the late 1970's by Anthony Greenwald and named it "cognitive response." The theory attempts to understand how people acquire and change their attitude and change in behaviour in response to persuasive communication. A cognitive response is a 'thought' generated in response to a persuasive communication (Wright, 1981) which thus, triggers an attitude change. The way in which a cognitive response affects attitude after being exposed to persuasive communication has to do with the way the recipient of the communication manipulates, elaborates and integrates the information (Greenwald, 1968).

When people are exposed to information, they relate it to pre-existing thoughts that they already have on the subject. People are of course more likely to be persuaded by messages to which they have previously thought optimistically. The cognitive response theory attempts to understand the link between the initial response to communication and the attitude change that results. It states that a cognitive response influences final attitude and therefore may affect behaviour.

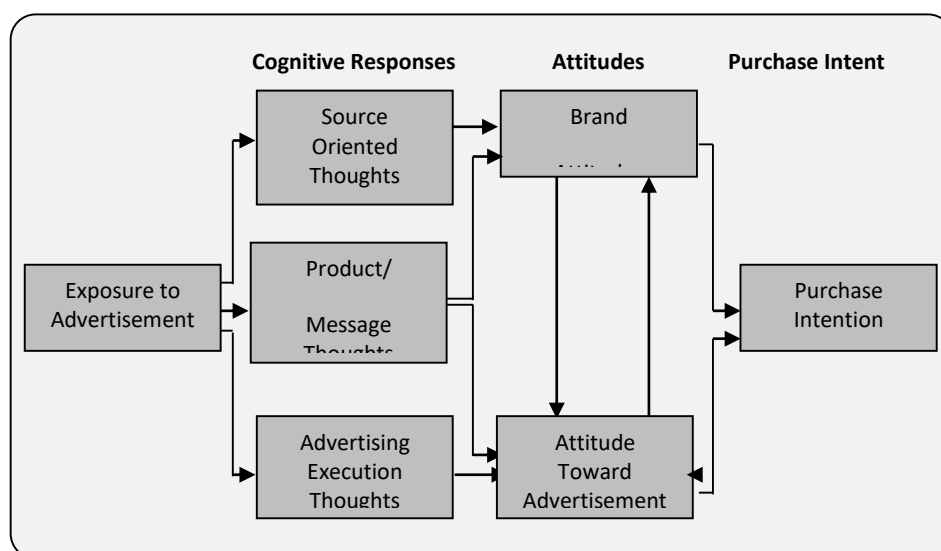


Figure 2.1: Cognitive Response Model

Source: Egan, J. (2007). *Marketing Communications*. UK: Thomson Learning.www.thomsonlearning.co.uk.

One of the most widely used models of advertising effects is this cognitive response model. It maintains that exposure to advertising elicits different types of response and purports to suggest how these responses relate to attitudes and purchase intentions.

According to the model, the response to an advertising stimulus is one of three ‘thought’ processes. The first category (produce message thought) comprise those thought process directed at the producer/service/or the claims made in the advertising. Source orientated thoughts represent those associated (positively or negatively) with the origin of the message. Advertising execution thought relate to how favourably or unfavourably the message are received. These in turn determine the consumers’ attitude towards the advertisement and the brand. Advertisers are particularly interested in consumers’ attitude to particular forms of advertising as studies suggest (Ambler and Burne 1999) that people who show a positive response to an advertisement are more likely to purchase a product than those whose attitude is neutral. It is attitude which, in the model, affects our purchase intentions.

This theory has been adopted in a myriad of existing political advertising research studies (Clinton and Owen, 2006; Goldstein and Freedman, 2002). By building on the work of Hovland (1953) and McGuire (1969), Zaller (1992) argues that yielding to political messages (being persuaded) is a function of not only being exposed to a message but also having the cognitive ability to take in or reject that political message. He claims that it is the interplay between predispositions, reception, and the balance of messages that determines whether citizens are influenced by media in general. When there is the right balance of forces—high levels of reception of one-sided messages by those with little ability to resist them— massive media effects can result (Zaller 1992). We are most likely to see effects when one side has more advertising on the air than the other, and we are more likely to see effects among voters with weaker attachments to the two political parties.

Expectancy Violation Theory

Expectancy Violation Theory (EVT) focuses on the relationship between language use and its persuasive effect (Burgoon and Miller, 1995). Most cultures and societies shape their own patterns of language and determine normative or non-normative patterns of the use of the language. When messages conform to people's culture, folklores, perception and expectations, the norms and expectations are strengthened, but the messages exert minimal impact on their attitudes. On the other hand, when communicators intentionally or accidentally violate the norms governing appropriate language usage, they violate the expectations of message receivers, and in turn, affect their receptivity. The expectancy violation theory identifies two violations: ‘positive’ or ‘negative’ violation. In regard to the persuasive effects of the two violations, the theory assumes that when messages positively violate people's linguistic expectations, the violation has a positive impact toward people's attitudes and evokes persuasive effectiveness (Burgoon and Miller, 1995). In contrast, when messages negatively violate people's linguistic expectations, a boomerang effect occurs, with receivers changing to the position opposite to the one advocated by the communicator (Surlin and Gordon, 2007).

Expectancy Violation Theory was introduced by Judee K. Burgoon in 1976 from her Nonverbal Expectancy Violations Model and has been applied to many fields of study, one being Political Advertising. Based on the theory, it can be assumed that voters have normative expectations about political advertising campaigns because such advertisement is one of the most common genres in today's politics, and, as a result, voters have been exposed to numerous political ads. If political ads conform to people's normative expectations, expectancy theory defines it as a

positive violation and predicts that it evokes positive effects toward the sponsor which could be the political candidate or the party. Many studies support this prediction (Surlin and Gordon, 2007; James & Hensel, 2001; Garramonne, 2004) but unfortunately, they have the limitation that they were not carried out or conducted in actual elections. In a true election, factors such as news coverage of the campaign and especially news coverage of a candidate's advertising may influence reactions to a particular political advertising strategy. Ansolabehere and Iyengar (1999) assert that news coverage of ads create a "ripple effect". Campaign advertisements have become so important that they are now a subject of news coverage and public debate in and of themselves. This ripple effect in the news coverage is usually the significant incentive that prompts many political candidates to devote more of their resources to advertising campaigns (Goldstein and Freedman, 2002). Ansolabehere and Iyengar (1999) further assert that media coverage of such ads can turn off independent voters and reinforce partisan voters' inclinations, amplifying the effects of the ads, thus, playing into the hands of the candidates and their handlers.

To adapt this Expectancy Violation Theory (EVT) to this current study, it can be observed that Nigerians are often of high expectations from their political leaders each election times. The atmosphere in the country is always charged as people expect to know what the new government has in store for them and this has always been because the incumbent government's policies and plans often time don't benefit the common masses. If the various political ad campaigns particularly the presidential ad campaigns in the country can conform to the people's normative expectations, it can be presumed that there will be positive or negative persuasive effects, thereby impacting election results for the sponsoring candidates or parties.

The Source Credibility Theory

This theory was introduced by Hovland, C., Janis, I., and Kelly, H. in 1953 during the World War II when the US government sought to use propaganda to influence public opinion in support of the war effort. It states that "people are more likely to be persuaded when the source presents itself as credible" (Kalbfleisch, 2003). Using this theory to explain the forming of an effect in political ads as well, Self (2007) describes 'Source Credibility' as "the believability of a communicator as perceived by the recipient of the message". The theory was further broken into three sub-models that can be used to make the theory more aptly applicable. These include: the factor model, the functional model, and the constructivist model. The factor model (a covering laws approach) helps determine the extent to which the receiver judges the source as being credible. The functional model (a covering laws approach) views credibility as the degree to which the source satisfies the receiver's individual needs.

The constructivist model (a human action approach) analyzes what the receiver does with the source's proposal. There are different elements that may comprise a person's credibility but, according to this source credibility theory, the two elements most commonly identified are 'perceived expertise' and 'trustworthiness' of the source. Source credibility theory research also indicates that the ability to internalize the message is influenced by the potential impact the message has upon the receiver. For example, Jeff is trying to persuade Matt that "Cheers" is the best television show that was ever aired. Matt is beginning to believe Jeff because he knows all the statistics of how well the show did when it was played. But, when he, Matt begins to question Jeff about the show's specific content, he finds him to be baffled. He later finds out from Chris that Jeff has never even watched the show himself. This is an example of source credibility theory working against the persuader. In this example, the person who is being persuaded, Matt, has found reason to question the integrity of the persuader, Jeff. Based on this

theory therefore, it can be assumed that a political ad can form an effect on the masses only if the 'source' to an ad message is believed to a greater extent and that the candidate advertised is perceived credible and able to satisfy the curiosities of the masses then, the masses will cast their votes in favour of such candidate. It can work perfectly when a presidential candidate engages in a manifesto in order to persuade the masses of what he/she has for them.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted the descriptive survey design. It allows for the collection of original data from the respondents, describes the present situation and problems in their natural setting and permits a sample representing the population to be drawn. This research design is considered most suitable for the study because it is versatile and practical. The data used for this work was obtained specifically from two sources namely; primary and secondary sources.

The population of the study comprises of the masses [i.e. the electorate] and the members of political parties (political candidates) in Nigeria who uses social media. The population of the electorate and that of the members of the political parties (political candidates) in Nigeria could not be ascertained, hence, given as an infinite population. Freund and Williams statistical formula was used to calculate the sample size for the infinite population, and 246 was gotten as the sample size. The researcher used the stratified random sampling method, which is a variant of the random sampling technique. Data gathered was analyzed using tables and simple percentages to show the distribution of results and understanding of analysis.

The data collection instrument that was used for this study is a Structured Questionnaire type. This was worded with a five point Likert scale Strongly Agreed [SA], Agreed [A], Undecided [U], Disagreed [D], Strongly Disagreed [SD].

Data Presentation and Analysis

A total number of 246 questionnaire copies were distributed to selected politicians and electorate; 123 copies were given each to politicians and electorate.

Table 4.1: There is a significant positive relationship between usage of Facebook as an awareness social media tool and projection of a political candidate's image in Nigeria

Options	Politicians	Electorate	Total	Percentage
Strongly agree	81	90	171	70
Agree	35	25	60	24
Undecided	1	1	2	0.8
Disagree	4	5	9	3.6
Strongly disagree	2	2	4	1.6
Total	123	123	246	100
Mean	4.41			
Standard deviation	0.92			

Source: Fieldwork, 2016

Table 4.1 indicates that out of 246 respondents 171(70%) of the respondents strongly agreed that there is a significant positive relationship between usage of Facebook as an awareness social media tool and projection of a political candidate image, 60(24%) of the respondents agreed with the statement, while 2 (0.8%) of the respondent were undecided about the statement, 9 (3.6%) of the respondent disagreed with the statement, and 4 (1.6%) of the respondents strongly disagreed with the statement. Based on our cutoff point which is 3.0, if our mean result is < 3.0 we reject the result, but if our mean result is > 3.0 we accept the result. Since our mean result is 4.41, it is therefore, taken that Image of a political candidate can be projected using Facebook as a media tool for creating awareness.

Table 4.2: Blogging as a credible social media tool to a large extent positively influences image of a political candidate in Nigeria.

Options	Politicians	Electorate	Total	Percentage
Strongly agree	71	100	171	70
Agree	35	20	55	22
Undecided	3	0	3	1
Disagree	10	2	12	5
Strongly disagree	4	1	6	2
Total	123	123	246	100
Mean	4.29			
Standard	4.68			
SD	1.43			

Source: Fieldwork, 2016

Table 4.2 results show that 171(70%) of respondent strongly agreed that blogging as a credible social media tool to a large extent influences image of a political candidate in Nigeria, 55(22%) of the respondents agreed with the statement, 3 (1%) of the respondents were undecided about the statement, 12 (5%) of the respondents disagreed with the statement, while 6 (2%) of the respondents strongly disagreed with the statement. Based on cutoff point of 3.0, if mean result is < 3.0 we reject the result but if the means result is > 3.0 we accept the result, and since our mean value is 4.29, that blogging as a credible social media tool to a large extent influences image of a political candidate in Nigeria.

Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis One

Ho: There is no significant positive relationship between usage of Facebook as an awareness social media tool and projection of a political candidate's image in Nigeria.

Table 4 . 3 Descriptive Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Facebook	2.0826	1.31097	246
Politicians Image	2.0435	1.25690	246

Table 4.4 Correlations

		Facebook	Politicians
Facebook	Pearson Correlation	1	.728**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	246	246
Politicians Image	Pearson Correlation	.728**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	246	246

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table (4.3) shows the descriptive statistics of the Facebook via, politician's image with a mean response of 2.0826 and std. deviation of 1.31097 for Facebook and a mean response of 2.0435 and std. deviation of 1.25690 for politician's image and number of respondents (246). By careful observation of standard deviation values, there is not much difference in terms of the standard deviation scores. This implies that there is about the same variability of data points between the dependent and independent variables.

Table (4.4) is the Pearson correlation coefficient for Facebook via, politician's image. The correlation coefficient shows 0.865. This value indicates that correlation is significant at 0.05 level (2tailed) and implies that there is a significant positive relationship between usage of Facebook as an awareness social media tool and projection of a political candidate's image in Nigeria ($r = .728$). The computed correlations coefficient is greater than the table value of $r = .195$ with 264 degrees of freedom ($df. = n-2$) at alpha level for a two-tailed test ($r = .728, p < .05$). However, since the computed $r = .728$, is greater than the table value of $.195$ we reject the null hypothesis and conclude that there is a significant relationship between usage of Facebook as an awareness social media tool and projection of a political candidate's image in Nigeria ($r = .728, P < .05$).

Hypothesis Two

Ho: Blogging as a credible social media tool to a large extent does not positively influence the image of a political candidate in Nigeria.

Table 4.5 Descriptive Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Politicians Image	1.7667	.61657	246
Blogging	2.1633	.99664	246

Table 4.6 Correlations

		Politician's image	Blogging
Pearson Correlation	Politician's Image	1.000	.764
	Blogging	.764	1.000
Sig. (1-tailed)	Politician's Image	.	.000
	Blogging	.000	.
N	Politician's Image	246	246
	Blogging	246	246

Table 4.7 Model Summary^b

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.764 ^a	.584	.583	.39825	.082

a. Predictors: (Constant), Blogging

b. Dependent Variable: Politician's Image

Table 4.8 ANOVA^b

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	66.403	1	66.403	418.677	.000 ^a
	Residual	47.263	246	.159		
	Total	113.667	245			

a. Predictors: (Constant), Blogging

b. Dependent Variable: Politician's Image

Table 4.9 Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.744	.055		13.516	.000
	Blogging	.473	.023	.764	20.462	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Politician's Image

R = 0.764

R² = 0.584

F = 418.677

T = 13.516

DW = 0.082

Interpretation:

The regression sum of squares (66.403) is greater than the residual sum of squares (47.263), which indicates that more of the variation in the dependent variable is not explained by the model. The significance value of the F statistics (0.000) is less than 0.05, which means that the variation explained by the model is not due to chance.

R, the correlation coefficient which has a value of 0.764, indicates that there is positive relationship between blogging and projection of politician's image. R square, the coefficient of determination, shows that 0.584% of the variation in innovation is explained by the model.

With the linear regression model, the error of estimate is low, with a value of about 0.39825. The Durbin Watson statistics of 0.082, which is not more than 2, indicates there is no autocorrelation.

The blogging coefficient of 0.764 indicates a positive significance between blogging and projection of politician's image, which is statistically significant (with $t = 13.516$). Therefore, the null hypothesis should be rejected and the alternative hypothesis accordingly accepted. Thus, blogging as a credible social media tool to a large extent positively influences the image of a political candidate in Nigeria.

Summary

The findings at the end of this study include the following:

- i. There is a significant positive relationship between usage of Facebook as an awareness social media tool and projection of a political candidates' image in Nigeria ($r = 0.764$; $F = 418.677$; $p < 0.05$).
- ii. Blogging as a credible social media tool to a large extent influences image of a political candidate in Nigeria ($r = 0.728$; $p < 0.05$).

CONCLUSION

From the foregoing findings, the study concludes thus:

Facebook have a positive influence on the image of political candidate in Nigeria. Facebook is an inevitable and indispensable tool for projecting and creating awareness by political candidates.

Blogging as a credible social media tool to a large extent influences image of a political candidate in Nigeria. Bloggers are seen to be professionals, objective and honest to their duties as such blogging is a credible tool when properly harnessed by political candidates would influence positively the image of such political candidate.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and conclusion, the recommendations were made;

1. Political candidates should carefully plan and execute communication strategies using various social media tools, so as to fully enjoy the inherent benefits of the social media tools (i.e credibility and awareness).
2. Politicians, particularly prominent political candidates should integrate communication strategies into their philosophy, practices and political plans, as this will be seen not just as reactive activities but proactive activities.
3. Politicians in Nigeria should emulate their counterparts in countries like USA, UK, Canada, who have seen and considered social media communication strategy as effective interventionist measure/approach necessary for shaping their images and behavioural pattern of the electorate' in the society.

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Published by European Centre for Research Training and Development UK (www.eajournals.org)

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