Social Media Marketing and Political Participation of Electorate in Rivers State, Nigeria

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Abstract: This study investigated the relationship between social media marketing and political participation in Rivers State, Nigeria. The study adopted a cross survey method in a non-contrived setting. The cross sectional approach was adopted and data were not manipulated. There are 3,215,273 registered voters in Rivers State. The Taro Yamen sample size determination formula was used to choose a sample of 400 electorates and politicians. 400 copies of questionnaires were distributed and out of which only 340 copies were returned and used in the study. The mean and standard deviation were used to describe the characteristics of the research instrument while Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to test the stated hypotheses. The study found among other things that social media marketing have significant influence on political participation. Except for voting in elections, campaign involvement and protest have significant relationship with political participation in Rivers State, Nigeria. The study therefore recommend that social media marketing should be encouraged in Nigeria not only for conventional marketing practices, but also in the area of political marketing especially for political participation.

Keywords: Social Media Marketing, Political Participation of Electorate, Voting, Campaign Involvement, Protest, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram

Introduction

One major pillar of a democratic state is political participation. Unfortunately, in Nigeria there is low level of political participation of electorates (Agu, 2015). Political participation refers to the involvement of the citizens of a country in the formulation and implementation of policies for their governance, and the participation in the choice of their leaders (Ikenwa, 2019). Political participation is actual participation in voluntary activities by which members of a society share in the selection of rulers, and directly and indirectly, in the formulation of public policy' (Falade, 2014). Voting during elections, involvement in campaign, attending rallies, holding political offices, government action, protest/criticism and petitions, contesting elections, supporting candidates during elections etc. are all forms of political participation.

Political participation of the citizenry in a democracy among other things act as check on elite power, prevents the rise of civil oligarchies and helps the electorates in having a stake in the collective endeavour of the people. Democratic capacity is built and political equality is achieved when citizens participate in the political process (Ikenwa, 2019). Citizens' participation

has a positive effect on the quality of democracy. The people get a sense of belonging in liberal democracies when they actively participate in the political process, thus giving credence to the utilitarian philosophy of 'greatest happiness of the greatest number (Parvin, 2018). All these would reduce agitation of marginalisation and other violent agitations which create instability politically, socially and economically.

Citizen's democratic involvement is a crucial component of modern democracies and democracy cannot function without it (Verba, 2003). According to Lijphart (1997), if some groups of citizens have a greater say in the selection of leaders than others, the gap between citizens and political elites might become even greater. Unequal representation creates a vicious circle of inequalities, thus widening the gap of inequality further'. Crises in most part of the world including Nigeria could be attributed to such inequality gap.

The consequences of low participation in a democracy are enormous. Ejue and Ekanem (2011), Adetoro and Omiyefa (2017), identified vote buying, political gangsterism, lack of patriotism, youth restiveness as some of the aftermath of non- participation in democratic process. Verba and Nie (1972) opined that democracy is absent, 'when few participate in decision making'.

Some of the reasons adduced for poor political participation in Nigeria democratic system include dissatisfaction of the electorates due to failed promises by politicians, lack of political trust, socio-economic factors, gender inequality, income level, disillusionment with the political system and failure of government to take advantage of the internet in online political participation. In order to stem the steady decline in electoral participation in Nigeria, Agu (2015) and Osondu (2014) suggested political education, respect of politics, adequate constitutional provision, citizen mobilisation etc.

It is against this present background that social media marketing can be used to assuage the situation of low political participation in Nigeria. Reliability, consistency, social interaction, interactivity, instantaneous features, reaching customers easily, reduced cost, visibility etc are some of the inherent benefits of social media marketing which are not found in the traditional marketing media.

From products and services marketing to "idea distribution", social media have permeated marketing landscape in such a fashion that it is now indispensable to the survival of marketing operation (Nick, Robert and Catherine 2011). The old practice of one way communication is no longer feasible. Interaction is now a two-way communication giving rise to real time and user communication.

Social media application have cut across diverse disciplines and endeavours like advertising, public relations, strategic communication and political communication. Today, the influence of social media usage in politics cannot be over-stressed and in the words of Stieglitz Dang-Xuan (2013), it has the potential of positively influencing political participation.

Although, the traditional media outlets are still prevalent in business and political marketing, the social media have become a veritable tool for political participation, sought after by politicians all over the world. Cases in point are the 2011/2015 national elections in Nigeria, Barak Obama 2008, 2012, presidential elections in the United States; 2013 Nyarendra Modi election in India and 2010 national election in the Netherlands to mention just a few.

In this era of social media usage, marketing could not afford to be left behind! Marketing has got its latest platform to connect with consumers, engage them in interactions and ultimately utilize these platforms for achieving organisational objectives. In the same way politicians have cashed into this opportunity by using different media sites to connect with their followers and other common people in order to propagate their views, disseminate information and engage with political discussion, among other topics.

Political parties and politicians can use social media to bypass media and communicate directly with voters through websites and social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter. 'But despite the potential for closer connections with voters, political parties and politicians are only reluctantly taking advantage of the interactive and social aspects of social media. Loss of control, limited time and resources are supposedly some of the reasons why parties are hesitantly using new digital communication tools (Klinger, 2013; Luders, Folstad & Waldul, 2014).

Marketing tools have always been used to solve political problems. Kotler (2010) defined marketing as the "social and managerial process by which individual and organizations obtained what they need and want through creating and exchanging value with others'. He explained that the basic tools firms use to observe organizational success should include the four (4) Ps, of which each has the ability to give customers the satisfaction at different times. The product in politics includes promises and favour conveyed by the aspirant/political parties. The price is electoral support, and voter is the customer. Promotion includes advertising, electronic Word-Of-Mouth (eWOM) (celebrity endorsement, public relations and other campaign activities (Schafferer, 2006).

Therefore, the application of marketing communication tools in the political arena, gives political parties, politicians and individuals the required edge over others in a political contest. In the case of Nigeria, the applications of marketing principles (political marketing) in the political arena have become useful in solving problem of political participation by the electorates.

Social media sites allow users partake in their political believes, support a specific candidate and interact with other political issues. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Blogs, YouTube etc. are some of the Social Network Sites (SNSs) that have been used for political participation, creating awareness and mobilization of the citizenry to achieve political goals. Effing, Hulbers and Hillegersberg (2011) contend that social media is the most influential factor in the political realms in different countries and it is "positively associated with citizens' political participation". Social media use in politics refers to the use of online social media platforms in political process and activities, (www.wikipedia.com). Oseni (2015) agree with Effing et al.. (2011) that social media have emerged as an important means of electioneering and the policing (defending) of election results.

Social media is a platform that let individuals and organisations participate in social networking. Posts are shared on various social media platforms to improve business visibility. In this era, social media is the best source for news updates, marketing, education and entertainment.

In Nigeria, the process of having an active citizens' participation in politics is still at a

low-ebb partly because of our political culture that is parochial instead of participatory.

Political participation in Nigeria dates back to the 1922 Hugh Clifford's constitution which introduced elective principle into Nigerian politics which led to the formation of political parties. It is worthy of note that the principle of election was only limited to four Nigerians out of the 10 elected members in the legislative council of 46 members. One member represented Calabar and three represented Lagos. Universal adult suffrage was absent as women were disenfranchised. Only male adults that have resided in Nigeria for 12 months on a gross income of E100 were eligible. Today democracy is a far departure from the erstwhile colonial government. There is universal adult suffrage and expectedly full citizens' participation. But unfortunately, the level of citizen participation is still relatively low. The traditional marketing communication practices have not yielded the required dividends in terms of the number of participants; hence social media marketing tools/platforms are beginning to be seen as veritable solution to fill this gap. Here again is the issue of low internet penetration in Nigeria, thus reducing the potentiality of youths' engagement in political activities (Effing, Hulbers & Hillegersberg, 2011).

Statement of the Problem

The Nigerian political system is bedevilled by low level of participation by the citizenry. Citizens are becoming averse in performing their civic obligations which are encapsulated in the 1948 Universal declaration of human rights by the United Nations. Voting in elections, involvement in political campaigns and carrying out protest and demonstrations have been abandoned by the citizenry, thus creating a situation where the future and progress of democracy is left in the hands of few individuals who manipulate the political system for their selfish purposes.

The dangers of not participating in political activities have led to the enthronement of poor and inept leadership that can hardly steer the ship of the nation to enviable height. Worst still, the electorates are left without a voice in the political process, thus making them mere canon folders in a democracy. The economy bears the brunt of poor leadership which might snowball into political crises like thuggery, riots, arson, loss of lives and properties, general insecurity and military take- over of government. Such crises have the tendency to overwhelm government of the day as experienced in Nigeria and other African countries.

Interestingly, electronic revolution has led social media being the end of all communications, thus prompting some questions as to the efficacy and influence of social media marketing on political participation of electorates across the globe.

Today, social media marketing is at the core of marketing activities because of its overriding advantages over old media in terms of speed, economy, interactivity, accessibility, connectivity etc. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Youtube, My space and so on have been used as platforms for political participation in most parts of the world.

In spite of the far-reaching benefits of social media, social media marketing have not been pervasive in its usage for political participation by the electorates in Rivers State, Nigeria. From available statistics, out of over 84 million registered voters in Nigeria, only 34.75% voted in the 2019 general election. In Rivers State, save for the violence witnessed, 21.0% of voters voted out of above 3 million registered voters (INEC, 2016). Comparatively in the United States

of America, in 2018, 153.07 million voters registered and 50.3% voted. In Germany also, out of above 61 million registered voters in 2018, more than 46 million voted. In the case of South Africa, 65.99% of 26 million voters voted. This poor scenario may not be unconnected with limited internet penetration and social media access, poverty and computer literacy among others in Nigeria.

Again, aside from the obvious importance of social media as a technological platform, it have been perceived as spreading fake information (news), propagating hate speeches, lacking control and regulation etc. The above foregoing has deepened the divergence among scholars as to the relationship between social media and electorates' participation in politics.

While Groshek and Dimitrova (2011); Zhang, Johnson, Seltzer and Bichard (2010), found no significant relationship between social media and political participation, Boulinne (2009), Dalrymple and Scheufele (2007), Tolber and Mc Neal (2003) contend that social media have significant relationship with political participation at least during election. In the same vein, Bimber and Copeland (2013) admit that digital media use in positively related to political participation.

Expectedly, social network sites (SNSs) could be used to transform social relations since they have the potential to be used as important political tools. SNSs connect large number of people irrespective of "space and time". The internet, therefore increases political engagement and strengthen democracy, (Anabel, Alexandra & Tower 2011; Antoci, Sebastine & Sodin 2011; Jarreth, 2008; Evan-Cowley & Hollander, 2010).

A lot of academics literatures have been written on social media marketing and political participation of electorates in recent past. For instance, Ayankoya, Cullen and Cautz (2014) in their study on social media marketing and politics observed that the use of social media in political campaign in South Africa indicate that the respondents utilises the internet, mobile technologies to evoke voting and participation. Ahmad, Alvi, Ittefaq (2019) in their study on the use of social media on political participation among university students in rural Pakistan, looked at the relationship between social media marketing and political efficacy, real media life participation and online activities. The work of Nnanyelugo and Nwafor (2013) on social media and political participation in Nigeria during the 2011 general elections espoused the short comings of social media but also accepted that it made vital input in political discourse.

Although, some literatures on social media marketing and political participation contend that there exist a relationship between social media and political marketing while others disagree. It is these mixed and inconclusive postulations by different authors that this study attempts to verify in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Again and most importantly is enormous literatures on social media and political participation have centred on communication and political science perspectives; none that is known to the author is on social media marketing and political participation in Rivers State, Nigeria, thus the gap of this study.
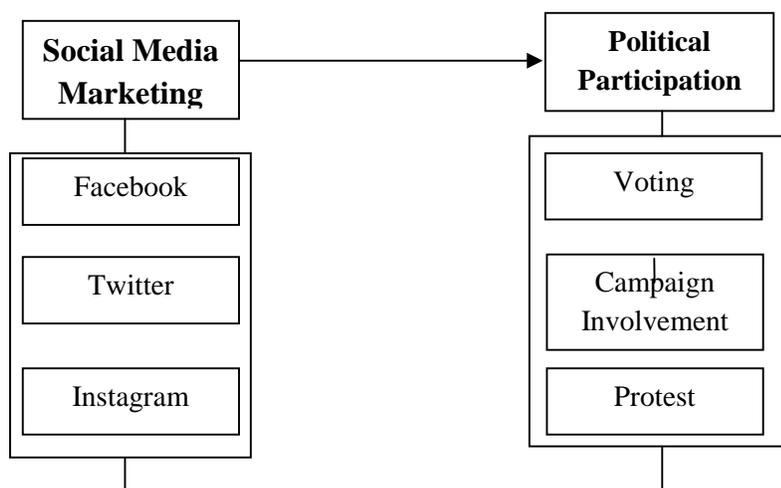
Conceptual Framework

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework on Social Media Marketing and Political Participation Source: Verba, S. & Nie, N. H. (1972) participation in America: Political Democracy and Social Equality and encyclopadia.com (2019).

Objectives of the Study
The objective of this study is to empirically investigate the relationship between social media marketing and political participation in Rivers State, Nigeria. In line with this general objective, the following specific objectives are proposed namely to

1.   To determine the effect of social media usage on voting in elections in Rivers State.
2.   Examine the relationship between social media usage and campaign involvement in Rivers State.
3.   To ascertain the influence of social media usage on protest in Rivers State.

Research Questions
In view of the objectives of the study, the following research questions are stated below:

1.   How does social media usage affect voting in elections in Rivers State?
2.   To what extent does social media usage relates with campaign involvement in Rivers State?
3.   How does social media usage influence protest in Rivers State?

Research Hypotheses
Using the conceptual framework and the research questions as the backbone to the study, the following relevant research hypotheses are stated below:

1. HO_1: There is no relationship between social media usage and voting in elections in Rivers State.

2.   H0$_2$: Social media usage has no relationship with campaign involvement during elections in Rivers State.

3.   H0$_3$: There is no significant influence between social media usage and protest in Rivers State.

Review of Related Literature

This section critically reviewed extant literature on the concept of social media marketing and political participation.

Theoretical Review

We looked at the relevance of three theories on this study: technology determinism, Source credibility theory and Uses and gratification theory.

Technological determinism theory is a reductionist theory that aims to provide a causative link between technology and a society's nature. The theory questions the degree to which human thought or action is influenced by technological factors. Thorstein Veblen popularised the theory of technological determinism. Langdon Winner provided two hypotheses for the theory: (1) technology of a given society is a fundamental influencer of the various ways in which a society exists and (2) changes in technology are the primary and most important source that leads to change in the society.

Source Credibility Theory (SCT) on the other hand, is a "term commonly used to imply a communicator's positive characteristics that affect the receiver's acceptance of a message." SCT became relevant during the Second World War II, when the United State government sought to use propaganda to influence public opinion in support of the war effort. It is part of the theories of persuasion and social judgement. Carl Hovland, Jenis and Kelly in 1963 are associated with the theory of source credibility theory. The SCT is an established theory that explains how communication's persuasiveness is affected by the perceived credibility of the source of the communication. Source credibility arises from how the public view or perceive a speaker.

Source credibility theory has been used by candidates in political campaign to influence the attitudes and opinions of voters. A candidate's credibility is important in determining the effectiveness of political advertising. It is also used in endorsements by celebrities attempting to use their status to influence voters.

This research work is anchored on Uses and Gratification (UGT) theory, which is an approach to understanding why people actively seek out specific media to satisfy needs. The UGT is an offshoot of Abraham Maslow theory of hierarchy of needs. Uses and gratification theory focuses on "what do people do with media?" It postulates that media is a highly available product and the audiences are the consumers of the same product. The overriding question on UGT is: why do people use media and what do they use them for? The theory discusses how users deliberately choose media that will satisfy given needs and allow one to enhance knowledge, relaxation, social interaction/companionship etc. Audience are not passive consumers of a media, rather they have power over their media consumption and assumes an active role in interpreting and integrating media in their own life. It therefore implies that the

media compete against other information sources for viewers' gratification. The UGT is based on the following assumptions:

a)   The audience is active and its media use is goal directed
b)   The media compete with other resources for need satisfaction.
c)   Value judgements of media content can only be assessed by the audience

UGT has been applied in mobile phone usage, internet usage, social media usage, friends-networking sites (Facebook, Twitter, Snapchart etc) and other applications, wikipedia.com.

The concept of Social Media Marketing

Social media marketing is the activity of driving website traffic through social media sites. Social Media Marketing (SMM) is a form of internet marketing that utilizes social networking websites as a marketing tool, Nwokah & Gladson-Nwokah (2015). Social media marketing makes use of social media sites to promote products and services. Social media sites are useful for building social (and business) networks and for exchanging ideas and knowledge, (www.innovationpie.com). Marketing definition has been broadened to include "idea distribution" which makes it imperative to use marketing tools, techniques and strategies in the marketing of political candidates. American Marketing Association (AMA) in its redefinition of marketing in 1985 says that marketing is the process of planning and executing the conception, pricing, promotion and distribution of ideas, goods and services to create exchanges that satisfy individual and organizational objective.

Social media has been defined by Marrian Webster as forms of electronic communication (such as websites for social networking and micro blogging) through which people create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other contents.

Social media rely heavily on web 2.0 which is a term used in 2004 to describe a new way in which software developers and end users started to utilize the World Wide Web; that is as a platform where content and applications are no longer created and published by individuals, but are continuously modified by all users in a participatory and collaborative fashion (Kaplan & Haiehlein, 2010). Web 2.0 allows the creation and exchange of user-generated content. It enhances creativity and knowledge exchange. Social media is a platform that allows people to participate in social networking. Post are shared on various social media platforms to improve business visibility. According to Nick et al. (2011) social media is described as the democratization of information, transforming people from content readers to content publishers.

Social media marketing uses podcasts, wikis, blogs, online video, photo sharing, news sharing and social network sites to reach a large or targeted audience. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, Pinterest, Myspace etc are some of the social media platforms used in political processes and activities.

Facebook and Political Participation

Facebook since it was founded in 2004 is one of the most utilized social networking sites. It has grown from being a high school and college network to one of the most globally popular Social

Networking Site (SNSS). In terms of politics, Facebook has become a platform for a wide range of political activities (Earl & Kimport, 2011; Ward, 2012). Some researchers have found a positive relationship between social media use and civic and political participation (Gil de Zuniga, Jung & Valenzuela, 2012; Piugl-Abril & Rojas, 2009; Valenzuela, Park & Kee 2009). As at April, 2011, Facebook has approximately 600million registered users and according to market researcher Ray (2009), social media usage among millennial is popular almost in all parts of the globe. Michausen (2011) admit that political parties and politicians in Pakistan have very active social media accounts to disseminate information for social media users and voters. Facebook is the most used network among youth for political information than other social networks like Twitter. Compared with e-mail, Facebook played prominent role in online and offline political participation in Pakistan. Schmiemann (2015) examined social media networks and political participation and concluded that Facebook content shows a positive relationship regarding political participation. Verba (2012) found that 39% of adults in the United States used social media, and one out of every eight adults used social media for civic and political purposes.

Facebook is one of the most significant platforms for online users to discuss politics and participate in politics offline. In 2015 general election in Nigeria, there was massive use of social network sites Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Blogs. This was made possible because of the participatory nature of these platforms for political campaign organization, electioneering crusades, ideological trumpeting exercise and voters' manipulation. Facebook was massively used in the Arab spring of 2011.

In 2018, Nigeria had 22.4 million internet users and in 2019, 24million. Social network users were approximately 29.3 million users and it was projected to grow to 36.8 million in 2023. According to Statcounter Global Statistics in 2018 by pulse, 78% of the entire population of over 200million use Facebook, 19.64% use Twitter, Pinterest 9.84%, Instagram 8.9%, YouTube 1.87% while LinkedIn was 0.27%. Whatsapp is the most active social media platform in Nigeria with 85% users. Facebook has about 20, 530,000 million users in Nigeria in 2019. Most users of Facebook are within the youthful age bracket of 25-34 and there are more men than women users.

Social media sites such as Facebook allow users to partake in their political belief, and support a specific candidate's interest with other political issues. Social media is different to traditional media because of its capacity to send messages from many to many, in real time or chosen time, and the possibility of using point- to-point communication. Ekweme and Folarin (2017) agree that social media site like Facebook played a major role in mobilizing people, creating awareness as well as participation and circulation of information about candidates.

Former United States President Berate Obama used 15 social media sites to run his campaign and systematically linked the online community to offline activities such as fund raising. Obama's election, Segolene Royal French election, Indian Prime Minister Election in 2012, Kenya election in 2013 and 2010 national elections in the Netherlands were all linked to social media usage.

According to available information, the 2012 election in the US was heavily discussed on Facebook. Facebook invite users to express political opinion or share political news. It also aligns itself to broader repertoires of self-expression and lifestyle values.

Twitter and Political Participation

Jack Dorsey, introduced the idea of an individual using a message service to communicate with a small group in March 21, 2006. Twitter was launched as an SMS based communication platform, https//store.tutorialspoint.com.

After 2006, twitter increasingly gained global popularity, with over 319 million users from 2016 upwards, generating millions of tweets daily and accommodating 1.6 million search queries per day (Daniel, 2016). Twitter since its launch has become one of the most united sites on the internet. It enables it users to make short posts about anything, but users are limited to only 140 characters in length and are single SMS message. Twitter enables firms to advertise their products on individual level, politicians to project and have followers, celebrities to be endorsed etc.

Obama's election in the USA and Donald trump victory at the polls can be linked to the use of Twitter. Trump had almost 10million Twitter followers compared to Hilary Clinton's seven million in 2016.

Twitter has acquired significance in political campaigns and it sustains more than 328 million monthly active users across the world. Twitter is a user-friendly tool for politics and political campaign (Ahmed, Lodhi & Shahzad, 2011). Twitter has been useful in aiding exchange of information between candidates and electorates. It helps citizens to be informed and influence their political choices, attitudes, beliefs and behaviour towards certain candidates.

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 multiple platforms and devices (Wikipedia, 2016).

Twitter offers us an update of things we know happen to be doing at a particular point in time.

Bartlett, Alex, Daniel, Fisher and Jasperson (2015) claimed that in 2015 general election in Nigeria, "twitter was ten times more active over the election period than at normal time". Political twitter users are more interested in and engaged in politics in general and less trusting to main stream media.

Bode and Dalrrymple (2014) assert that "Twitter increasingly performs the agenda setting function in politics once dominated by television". Television or, at least televised news now follows the lead of Twitter (Ott, 2017). Twitter, as microblogging platform and by its interactive structure, not only facilitate communication among its users but has contributed to political participation.

Twitter has been around since 2006 but between 2008 and 2012 elections, Twitter became a driving force for political mobilization participation in the United State. In the 2011 Arab spring, twitter was handy in the amplification of messages during the protest.

Instagram and Political Participation

Instagram is an American photo and video-sharing social networking service owned by Facebook, Inc. It was created by Kelvin Systrom and Mike Krieger in October 2010, wikipedia.com. Instagram is a free, online photo-sharing application and social network platform and was acquired by Facebook in 2012. It allows users to edit and upload photos and

short videos through a mobile app. Users can add a caption to each posts and use hashtags and location-based geotags to index the post and make them searchable by other users within the app.

As with other social networking platform, Instagram users can like, comment on and bookmark other posts, as well as send private messages to their friends via the Instagram Direct feature (www.lifewire.com, 2019). Instagram has around 200 million users in 2010.According to Statcounter Globalstats, Nigeria has about 8.9% Instagram users. Instagram Questions introduced in 2018 allows users to answer questions posted by their followers while Instagram Direct allows you to share photos, videos, hashtag pages, profiles and locations with a single person or small group of people (up to 15 people) right from a user's news feed. Parmelee and Nataliya (2019) found out that information/guidance motives are the most important for following political leaders on Instagram, with social utility being the next highest motive. Instagram is growing in political importance (Parmelee & Nataliya, 2019). At 400 million active users, Instagram is the second largest social media sites ahead of Twitter and behind Facebook, Alhabash & Ma (2017). During the 2016 US presidential election, all major party candidates during the primaries and general election actively used Instagram to further their message, Duffy (2016); Sander (2015). Internationally, leaders in more than 70% countries in the United Nations have an Instagram presence (Burston-Marsteller, 2017). Politicians could use demographic factors, ideology, interest in politics, and trust in government to tailor their uses of Instagram based on the political attitude and demographic makeup of the groups they wish to influence. According to Otoms (2018), Instagram account was used in 2017 Indonisia election as a political campaign tool. In addition Instagram usage also had positive impact that reduced the cost of political campaign. There are indications that USA politicians are turning to Instagram ahead of the 2020 election targeting the millennial (www.ft.com). In Germany Instagram is the second largest social media platform after Facebook. It has been argued that though Instagram did not contribute to the victory in German election, it was widely used by politicians between 2017 and 2019.

Concept of Political Participation
Political participation is a concept in political science and political marketing. Political participation is loosely defined as citizens' activities affecting politics.

Xie and Jaeger (2008) see political participation as "behaviours aimed at shaping governmental policy either by influencing the selection of government personnel or by affecting their choices." Other authors define political participation as "voluntary activities by which members of a society share in the selection of rulers and directly or indirectly in the formation of public policy," (Verba, Nie & Kim 1978). In sum, political participation simply means that a person is participating in the political process by making his or her opinion and beliefs known. It is often used to describe an action taken by a citizen to influence the outcome of a political issue.

There are various forms of political participation namely: voting in elections, involvement in political (election) campaign, protest over government policies, participating in consultations like town hall meeting, signing petitions, donating money to a cause, holding a

public official position, taking part in public debate, engaging in political parties and association, and civil disobedience etc. Political participation is one of the cardinal pillars of a democracy from the Athenian era to the present time. As an essential part of democracy, political participation is an antidote against tyranny, oppression, bad government, poor leadership etc which are bane of African democracy. In the words of Joseph de Maistre a French publisher said in a democracy, "every country gets the kind of government it deserves." This is a direct reference to political participation and voting in elections in particular. This explains why citizens' participation in a democracy is a panacea to good government. Traditional and new media are used to evoke political participation in both developed and developing countries.

Voting as a measure of Political Participation
Voting is the most important form of political participation. To vote means to cast a vote or to assert a formalised choice in an election. Voting allows for more peoples view to be represented than any other activity. Voting right is a political and civic right of citizens at elections. The right is guaranteed by the universal declaration of human right of 1948. To vote in an election has some requirements – age, registration, voters' card etc. In order to participate in an election, citizens must be registered by an electoral body.

In Nigeria, the conduct of elections is handled by an agency known as the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). Voting in Nigeria began since 1922 when the Clifford constitution came into being. New media and technology, such as social network sites, blogs and online campaign donations have provided new avenues for political participation. Voting in election may be manual or electronic. People vote for candidates based on party affiliation, manifesto, ideology and belief. According to Nkwede (2019), voting is the fulcrum of political participation in liberal democracies. Voters vote because of the inherent or expected benefits from a candidate.

Voting is the legal, political and social mechanism through which the citizens are able to express their participation in elections, exercise their interest and needs to their leaders (Bassey & Samuel, 2011). It is the only singular act through which people would participate in the political process. Voting is a kind of preference for a political candidate. Voting can also be done on issues like referendum and plebiscite. Voting is a fundamental right of citizens. In Nigerian constitution the right to vote and be voted for is enshrined. Voting is a key ingredient to ensure a credible election.

Election campaign as a measure of Political Participation
Collins English dictionary defines election campaign as "a time when a politician or partytry to persuade people to vote for them." A political campaign is an organised effort which seeks to influence the decision making process within a specific group.

In democracies, political campaigns are often referred to as electoral campaign, where representatives are chosen or referendum decided (Abizadeh, 2005). Political campaign is one of the forms of political participation. Election campaigns (political campaigns) are carried out for nomination (primary election) of candidates and general elections. In a general election, the chosen party candidate contest with candidates from other political parties. A political party is

an organized group of persons, sharing the same ideology and working to control the machinery of government through periodic elections.

Electoral campaign is part of political participation and it is accompanied in most cases by candidates' debates. Debates are an important element of a general election, allowing candidates to answer questions on policy and prior decision.

Campaign message contains ideas that the candidate wants to share with the voters. It is to get those who agree with their ideas to support them when running for a political position.

The crafting of political campaign messages does not assure the candidates' victory, wikipedia.com. Political advertising and propaganda are part of political campaigns. There are rules and regulations governing election campaigns which are set by the electoral body.

Today, the internet is now a core element of modern political campaigns. Facebook, twitter, Instagram, blogs etc are some of the social network sites (SNS) used for election campaign. These social media platforms have helped to drive political campaign to reach a wide audience in split seconds. Barack Obama used internet medium in the 2008/2012 general elections in the USA. Same for Donald Trump in 2016, Jonathan Goodluck 2011, Mohammadu Buhari election in Nigeria and in other parts of the globe. Recent political campaigns have been both online and the use of traditional media. All these campaigns brought the use of internet on various social media to the spotlight.

Election campaigns are the means by which candidates and political parties prepare and present their ideas and positions on issues to the voters in the period preceding elections day, (www.datainitiative.com). Social media campaigning has grown into a very attractive means of reaching out to potential voters, www.whatargets.me/en/.

Protest as a measure of Political Participation

A protest or demonstration is an expression of bearing witness on behalf of an express cause by words or actions with regard to particular events, policies or situation (Eesuala, 2015).

Protest can take many different forms, from individual statements to mass demonstrations. Protests or demonstrations are means of holding dissents or expressing discontent through public matches. It is a form of political participation. Civil disobedience, non-violent resistance, vigil march, rally or demonstration, strike, boycott, petitions, riots, etc are all forms of political participation in a democracy. Protest though never been a new phenomenon in human history has continually increased in the global scene today. Protest is a form of political participation. Protest refers to expression of dissent, ventilation of anger or resistance against a particular phenomenon. Resistance, revolt, uprising and strike an equally related to protest because they are all contentious activities on the part of some people making some claims. According to Eesuola (2015) election which is the most common form of political participation is ritualistic and periodized, and citizens often have no choice than to follow the rituals and periodization before they can achieve any political or social changes. This explains why protest is inevitable.

Protect demonstration is fast becoming an entrenched symbol of political participation amongst all nations of the world. It is perhaps the most used means of participation now, probably because it does not have age or gender restrictions and demand no known protocol

(Eesuola, 2015).

Protest may be violent or non-violent. Protests are used to influence government decisions on a policy or support governmental causes. Protest demonstrations are means of participation in politics at the macro-level. Demonstrations are usually physical gatherings, but virtue or online demonstrations are certainly possible.

Social Media Marketing and Political Participation

Gunelius (2011) posited that social media marketing is "any form of direct or indirect marketing that is used to build awareness, recognition, recall, and action for a brand, business, product, person, or other entity and is carried out using the tools of the social web, such as blogging, micro-blogging, social networking, social bookmarking and content sharing".

Kotler, Amstrong, Wong and Sanders (2008) describe social media marketing as a social and managerial process by which individuals and groups obtain what they need and want through social networking." Social media usage has been facilitated by web 2.0. Web 2.0 brought an "unprecedented change in the online users' behaviour (Chan & Guillet, 2011). Twenty first century web sites are collaborative, interactive, vibrant and dynamic construct on web 2.0 according to the needs and demands of users. Social media marketing is now integrated to organizations' marketing communications plans. Integrated marketing communications is a practice organization follow to connect with their target markets.

New digital technology, including social media, creates a new paradigm in political campaign. Movements powered by the social media have toppled governments and helped others to win elections, giving it a role in the new generation of political marketing campaigns (Anyankoya, et al., 2014). Barak Obama, election in 2008/2012, Donald Trump's, elections in the USA, Arab Spring, Kenya 2013 election, 2011 election in the Netherland, 2015 election in Nigeria, Indian Prime Minister elections are cases where social media marketing have been used. Election is a key ingredient in political participation. Researches have it that there exist significant relationship between social usage and political participation in developed and developing nations.

Social media marketing and political participation have again brought political marketing to the fore: an area that is less discussed in marketing. The focus of political marketing is to "market values, ideologies and candidates of a political party in contrast to the conventional marketing of products and services in commercial organization, Baines (2012). Social media have been used in political context in a variety of ways: building relationships, campaign organization and communication, political engagement and political crowd sourcing, (Ayankoya, et al., 2014). Social media have changed the way in which political communication take place globally. Politicians, political parties, institutions are all using social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram etc to communicate with and engage voters. In this present century, social media have shown a positive relationship between offline and online political participation, (Boulianne, 2015; Skoric, Zhu, Goh & Pang, 2016).

The potential of political parties to connect, communicate, mobilize, fundraise and affect the news agenda through social media are some of the strategic reasons why political parties are increasingly performing online politics (Johnson, 2011).

Voting, involvement in electioneering campaign, protest, town hall meeting, donating to a political party, holding public official position, boycott etc are all forms of political participation.

Empirical Review

Taufiq, Ahmad and Muhammad (2019) studied the use of social media on political participation among university students in rural Pakistan. The study adopted correlation method and found out that majority of the students use social media for political awareness and information. In addition, the authors found that political efficacy is significantly based on online political participation. The findings reveal that online political activities strongly correlate to political awareness and offline political participation.

Okolo, Ugomma and Obikeze (2017) studied the effects of social media in the marketing of political candidates in Nigeria. The study used simple percentages, Pearson Moment Correlation Coefficient and Regression analysis. It was found from the study that there is a significant positive relationship between usage of Facebook as an awareness media tool and projection of a political candidates' image in Nigeria. The study 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 enjoy fully the benefits of the social media tools.

Ayankoya et al. (2014) investigated the use of social media in political campaigns with reference to South Africa. Correlation analysis was used in the study and it was found that the respondents utilize the intent, mobile technologies and social media in the social media strategy of the political party. The findings of the study show that there might be a mismatch between the perception of the people and the way the politicians and political parties in South Africa are using social media. This would imply that there are yet untapped opportunities for the use of social media for politics1 in South Africa. It was suggested that managers of political campaigns need to align the choice of media to the market segment. They need to integrate social media with traditional marketing methods.

Stiegliz and Dang-Xuam (2014) study on social media and political communication used qualitative method of analysis to propose a methodological framework for social media analytic in political context. It summarizes most important politically relevant issues from the perspective of political institutions and corresponding methodologies from different scientific disciplines.

Okoro and Nwafor (2013) studied social media and political participation in Nigeria during the 2011 general election. The study examined the experiment of social media use for political participation in the country during the 2011 general election. It was found that whereas many used the technology to make vital input in the political discourse, others used it to attack opponents, spread false rumours, hate and inciting messages which were believed to have contributed in the violence and tensions witnessed before, during and after the elections in many parts of the country.

The study used survey research design. The research work recommended urgent review

of the various media law to addresses the peculiar technicalities involved in monitoring and moderating the use of different social media platforms.

Gap in Literature

Adegbola and Scherice (2019) examined the relationship between media use and political engagement: a comparative study among the United States, Kenya and Nigeria. Taufik et al. (2019) studied the use of social media on political participation among university students in rural Pakistan while Okolo, et al. (2017) study was on the effects of the social media in the marketing of political candidates in Nigeria. Anyankoya et al. (2014) studied social media marketing in politics of South Africa. Okoro and Nwafor (2013) study examined the role of social media during the 2011 general election in Nigeria to discover the lapses and lessons to be learnt.

In all these published works, none is on "social media marketing and political participation in Rivers State, Nigeria". This research work because of its specificity to Rivers State closes the existing literature gap in this area of study.

Methodology

This study adopted a causal investigation to establish the relationship between social media marketing and political orientation in Rivers State Nigeria. The cross sectional study involves a study at a single time. This study involved the collection of standardized information from a sample selected from a population.

Our target population is the number of registered voters in Rivers State. According to Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), the total number of registered voters in Rivers State for the 2019 general election is 3,215,273. There are 23 local government areas in Rivers State. According to Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table, a population that is above one million has a sample size of 384. Using Taro Yamen sample determination formular

$$n \quad = \quad \frac{N}{1 + N\,(e)^2}$$

n   =   sample size

N   =   number of people in a population

e   =   allowable error (%)

The calculation yielded 399.9 as the sample size. Based on Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table, and Taro Yamen calculation, we chose 400 persons as our sample size for easy computation. The sample size includes politicians and electorates in Rivers State. The sample was selected using simple random sampling method.

The study adopted face, content and construct validity measures. Our measuring instruments were given face, content and construct validity by senior, Ignatius Ajuru University of Education where copies of our questionnaire were given for vetting. Based on their responses the final questionnaire items were prepared and administered. The reliability of the

instrument underwent two stages. The first stage was done before the collection of data while the other was done after the collection of data. This is to ensure a proper data quality of our research instrument. Comments were received and corrections made. Later the new instrument was given to 5 staff of the INEC, Rivers State.

The questionnaires were distributed to all the 23 local government areas and senior staff of INEC. Five point Likert scale was used. The researcher made use of secondary data which include data from academic articles in referred journals, relevant textbooks and the internet. Questionnaire was the major instrument of data collection. It was not possible to get the number of social media users in Rivers state except for the entire country. However, the essence of our questionnaire is to provide answers to such information. Five senior staff of INEC, Rivers state was given the questionnaire for the commissions' contribution to the research instrument. The essence of this process was to ensure test, re-test reliability.

All the items were found to be reliable having exceeded the threshold of 0.7. The composite Crumbach Alpha coefficient of 0.95 also indicates that the instrument is highly reliable. This implies that the instrument can be used for further analysis. Out of the 399 questionnaires administered, 340 were retrieved giving a response rate of 85%. The mean criteria were based on a 5 point-Likert scale.

The next section shows data analysis and the result from the study.

Data Analysis and Result Presentation

Testing of Hypotheses
The hypotheses were tested using the statistical tool of Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMC) at the significance level of .05.

Research Hypothesis 1: There is no relationship between social media usage and voting in elections in Rivers State.

Table 5: Testing of Hypothesis 1

	Correlations				
		Item 12	**Item 13**	**Item 14**	**Item 15**	**Item 16**
Item 12	Pearson Correlation	1	.572[**]	.066	.763[**]	-.007
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.225	.000	.903
	N	340	340	340	340	340
Item 13	Pearson Correlation	.572[**]	1	.466[**]	.470[**]	.567[**]
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000	.000
	N	340	340	340	340	340
Item 14	Pearson Correlation	.066	.466[**]	1	-.051	.788[**]

	Sig. (2-tailed)	.225	.000		.348	.000
	N	340	340	340	340	340
Item 15	Pearson Correlation	.763**	.470**	-.051	1	.020
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.348		.718
	N	340	340	340	340	340
Item 16	Pearson Correlation	-.007	.567**	.788**	.020	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.903	.000	.000	.718	
	N	340	340	340	340	340

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

Source: SPSS version 23 Output.

Research Hypothesis 2: Social media usage has no relationship with campaign involvement during elections in Rivers State.

Table 6: Testing of Research hypothesis 2

Correlations

		Item 17	Item 18	Item 19	Item 20	Item 21
Item17	Pearson Correlation	1	-.054	.666**	.358**	-.025
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.319	.000	.000	.641
	N	340	340	340	340	340
Item18	Pearson Correlation	-.054	1	.423**	.041	.701**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.319		.000	.456	.000
	N	340	340	340	340	340
Item19	Pearson Correlation	.666**	.423**	1	.494**	.460**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000	.000
	N	340	340	340	340	340
Item20	Pearson Correlation	.358**	.041	.494**	1	.015
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.456	.000		.781
	N	340	340	340	340	340
Item1	Pearson Correlation	-.025	.701**	.460**	.015	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.641	.000	.000	.781	
	N	340	340	340	340	340

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

Source: SPSS version 23 Output.

Research Hypothesis 3: There is no significant influence between social media usage and protest in Rivers State.

Table 7: Testing of hypothesis 3

		Item 22	Item 23	Item 24	Item 25	Item 26
			Correlations			
		Item 22	**Item 23**	**Item 24**	**Item 25**	**Item 26**
Item 22	Pearson Correlation	1	.659**	.462**	.565**	.663**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	340	340	340	340	340
Item 23	Pearson Correlation	.659**	1	.368**	.656**	.469**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000	.000
	N	340	340	340	340	340
Item 24	Pearson Correlation	.462**	.368**	1	.606**	.273**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000	.000
	N	340	340	340	340	340
Item 25	Pearson Correlation	.565**	.656**	.606**	1	.508**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000		.000
	N	340	340	340	340	340
Item 26	Pearson Correlation	.663**	.469**	.273**	.508**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	
	N	340	340	340	340	340

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
Source: SPSS version 23 Output.

Discussion of Findings
Table 5 above shows in hypothesis 1, p-value of .324>.05 which implies that there is no significant relationship between social media usage and voting in elections in Rivers State. The null hypothesis is therefore accepted. The stance of the respondents proves that social media usage does not necessarily influence electorates in voting in elections in Rivers state. The position of respondents affirms the position of Groshek and Dimitrova (2011), and Zang *et al.* (2010) who found no significant impact between social media and political participation. This implies that other persuasions aside social media influence voting attitude of electorates in electioneering.

Table 6 shows in hypothesis 2, p-value of .02<.05 implies that there is a significant relationship with campaign involvement during elections in Rivers State. The respondents opined that social media influences campaign or that social media is a campaign tool in

elections in Rivers State. The null hypothesis is therefore rejected. The position of the respondents aligns with Stieglitz and Dang-Xuan (2013), stating that social media application has cut across diverse disciplines and endeavours like advertising, public relations, strategic communication and political communication. This implies that social media are used for political advertising and as political marketing tools.

Table 7 shows in hypothesis 3, p-value of .000<.05 which implies that there is a significant influence between social media usage and protest in Rivers State. The null hypothesis is therefore rejected. The position of respondents indicates that protest is a form of political participation in Rivers State. It is a medium in which a people or group or persons register dissatisfaction over the conduct of a particular party or government policy and action. The position of the respondents is buttressed by Baine (2012) stating that protest is an essential part of democracy and political participation is an antidote against tyranny, oppression, bad government, poor leadership etc.

Summary of Findings
The study on Social Media Marketing and Political Participation in Rivers State, Nigeria found the following:

1. That there is no significant relationship between social media usage and voting in elections in Rivers State. This implies that social media usage does not necessarily increase vote cast in elections in Rivers State.
2. There is a significant relationship between social media usage and campaign involvement during elections in Rivers State. The respondents affirmed that social media are campaign tools by politicians in Rivers State.
3. There is a significant influence between social media usage and protest in Rivers State. The respondents agree that social media usage is an avenue to express public dissatisfaction on government policies and actions.

Conclusion
Social media marketing plays an important role in political participation and engagement. Social media have contributed in replacing traditional media, facilitating political engagement, strengthening strategic collaboration as well as influencing government decisions in relation to politics. It has been proven that social media usage is a veritable political marketing tool. It should therefore not be over-looked. These are tools used by majority of young persons under the age of 40 years for political participation. This explains the vigour with which it is used.

Recommendations
Based on the findings, the following have been recommended:

1. Since there is a significant relationship between social media marketing and political participation in Rivers State, social media marketing should be encouraged in Nigeria not only for conventional marketing practices but also in the area of political marketing especially as it relates to political participation.

2. The use of Social media should be encouraged by government and politicians to reduce campaign cost since there is a significant relationship between social media usage and campaign involvement during elections in Rivers State.

3. Since there is a significant influence between social media usage and protest in Rivers State, the use of social media should be moderated by government to check excesses that may lead to abuse and social unrest.

4. Government and marketing practitioners should design strategies aimed at increasing the usage level of social media in Nigeria by the citizenry for political participation.

5. It is important for the media industry, politicians, political consultants and citizens to adjust their behaviours to leverage this new competitive environment which social media marketing represents.

6. There should be a combination of new and old media by political office seekers, political consultants and marketing practitioners to increase the level of political participation in Nigeria.

7. One area this study recommends researchers to investigate further is the reason why there is an inverse relationship between social media marketing and voting in elections in Rivers State.

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