Citizen Media and the 2015 General Elections in South-South Region of Nigeria: Implications for the Nations Democratic Growth

Ntiense J. Usua, *Ph.D.*
University of Port Harcourt
&
Faustinus G. Nwachukwu, *Ph.D.*
University of Port Harcourt

Abstract

New media technology has liberalized the practice of journalism by putting in the hands of ordinary citizens, rather than the so-called professionals, the tools for processing and disseminating news and information. This study was carried out to investigate the ways in which politicians and other Nigerian citizens used citizen media before, during and after the elections. A survey was carried out in three states of the South-South region of Nigeria. A focus group discussion was also used for detailed analysis of the issues raised. The outcome of the exercise showed that indeed citizen media featured prominently from the period leading to the elections, through the electioneering campaign period, as well as during the collation of election results. It was further noted that citizen media were

used to disseminate false information and abuses by followers of leading political actors. The media were also used to declare unverifiable result figures, leading in some cases, to confusion and election violence. As a result, it is recommended that Nigerians should be educated on appropriate use of citizen media and that digital literacy should form part of the general education of the public.

Keywords: Citizen Media, Elections, Democracy, New media, Digital Literacy

Introduction

Leadership failure and political instability seems to be the greatest problems plaguing developing nations such as Nigeria and others in the African region. The struggle to either hold on to power in the case of incumbent leaders and attempt to wrestle power from incumbents in the case of opposition has always landed developing nations in grim political quagmire. Nigeria's democratic experiments since independence have not been particularly successful because of a number of reasons, chief of which is the problem of transition from one credible government to another.

From the preparations towards election, through the election and the release of results; it has always been difficult managing elections in Nigeria. During the First Republic for instance, political leaders demonstrated very little capacity to manage the political process of the nation which resulted in the first military coup in Nigeria. This in the view of Owens-Ibie, (in Usua, 2006), was because political pursuit was "fired by

calculations of financial or material gain or the promotion of self-interest" (p. 65). Again, Usua (2006) quotes Babangida as observing that during that epoch, "the rules which were designed to govern the 'game of politics' were often ignored or blatantly violated as politicians turned the political arena into a 'battle ground' which only catered for the survival of the fittest… the incumbent political actors closed all re-entry channels (p. 63).

The political situation according to Udeajah (2004) and Ibagere (1995) was not different during the second and third republics. In fact Ibagere (1995) notes that during the Second Republic, "the old political gladiators of the First Republic stepped forward once more to perform a rehash of what obtained during the years after independence" (p.134).

During the fourth Republic, Udeajah (2004) notes that elections did not go without rancour and violence in some parts of the country. In recent elections—2003, 2007, 2011 and in 2015—reports of killings, ballot box stuffing and snatching, intimidations and general sense of insecurity as well as other acts flouting election guidelines were recorded. These acts and indeed the insinuations, suggestions and even actual call by some people for the military to return to governance, were formidable threat to democracy and good governance. At a time nations of the world have perfected democratic rule; when even third world nation including those in Africa, (Ghana and South Africa for instance) appears to have turned onto the fast lane in democratic practice, Nigeria continues to grapple with mere basics of democratic principles and practices. Democratic governance the world over, is not merely fashionable, it is the most effective, purpose driven and people oriented type of governance that has served the civilized world for many decades, resulting in rapid development and stability.

Nigeria's inability to consolidate and grow its democratic rule has been a thing of deep concern to many individuals and

nations including former allies and friends. This may in some cases, have led to unfavourable economic relations, poor military cooperation as well as shabby and disdainful treatment of Nigerian officials and citizens by some part of the international community. However, it is the endemic poverty and hunger, unemployment, insecurity, infrastructural deficit and corruption at home that have been the greatest reason for worry. The Nigerian system can hardly produce purposeful, sincere leaders to run the democratic process.

The failure of the political class and others who play key role in the nation's democratic process is seen also as failure of the media because the media are part of the larger socio-political system. Politics and media practice are hardly separable. The fact that media workers and politicians need one another and often work together, even if for disparate reasons (Kogah 2008), means that the journalist and the politician will influence the work of each other. Through the four epochs of Nigerian democracy, the media either helped to destroy democracy or did not do enough to forestall the destruction of democratic progress. This view is supported by Ekpu, (1993), Akinrinade (1997), Owens-Ibie (Usua 2006) among other writers. Distractions which lead to compromise or negligence that may in whatever way be interpreted as limitations of the media in working towards the sustenance and growth of democracy in Nigeria are multi-faceted. Similarly, Allen (2012) notes that concerns about the integrity of the media have been expressed by many.

The frustration that citizens sometimes experience, especially during electioneering campaigns and the tendency for some sections of the mainstream media to project privileged interest against the projection of the minority voices in part, explains the rising interest in citizen media practice. The world over citizen media, which refers to those technologies that give ordinary citizens the privilege to practice journalism or any other type of media practice, has necessitated a redefinition of media practice. Some even believe that what citizens do using these

media may have necessitated a new nomenclature of the practice itself. The various suggestions to this effect include grassroots journalism, distributed journalism, open source journalism, participatory journalism, hyper local journalism or network journalism (Allen 2009). Elsewhere, Allen (2012) quotes Manuel Castells as describing this type of communication as "mass self-communication". The technologies that enable an average, non-media-trained citizen, to generate and share information and opinions have today permeated almost the entire globe including developing nations like Nigeria. The period leading to the 2015 General Elections as well as after, saw a lot of information sharing through the cell phone, and related devices enabled by the Internet.

Research questions

1.   What citizen media platforms were frequently used by politicians and their followers in the South-South region of Nigeria for the purpose of sharing information during the 2015 General Elections?

2.   In what ways did politicians and their supporters in the South-South region of Nigeria and their supporters use citizen media to sell themselves and their candidates to the voting public before, during and after the 2015 General Elections?

3.   Did the messages that were received by members of the public influence voting decisions of the people of South-South region of Nigeria during the 2015 elections?

4.   Did citizens and residents of South-South region of Nigeria receive election results through citizen media platforms before such result were verified by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC)?

5.   What challenges associated with the use of citizen media were noticed in the South-South region during the 2015 General Elections in Nigeria?

Theoretical Background

This paper is anchored on the Technological Determinism theory. This theory explains developments in human society as a result of breakthroughs in technology or better put, the theory proposes that the shape and nature of human developments are as a result of upheavals in technological advancements. Simply put, what this means is that man's growth and advancement is determined by the nature and sophistication of the tools which he creates. In other words, man creates the technologies which determine or shape his future.

In relation to the media, Marshal McLuhan the proponent of technological determinism theory says that the media technology basically shapes how humans think, feel and act thereby determining how the society is organized and operates (Asemah, 2011). The medium employed for communication determines the nature and shape of the message. The medium is the message according to McLuhan. It determines the shape, size and nature of the message. He says that "inventions in technology invariably cause cultural change".

This theory can explain the role the citizen media can play in shaping the nature and shape of communication during a period demanding for increased information flow and sharing as in the 2015 General Elections. With the coming of the new media there has been increased access to mass communication processes by the citizens. The masses are no longer mass media content consumers but also content creators. This has been made possible by the availability of new media technologies equipped with facilities that allow all and sundry to participate in the mass communication process as both content consumers and content creators.

Literature Review

The media have come to occupy a prominent place in human activities and indeed human existence to the extent that some scholars write that it is almost impossibility for man to do without the media in today's world. Whether we are examining man and his environment, his culture and even everyday business transaction, the media play very significant role. This is in line with the view of Nwachukwu and Onyekwere (2012) that it is the recognition of the potential of the media to make invaluable contributions in the society that governments and change agents adopt them as tools for propagating policies and programmes that can inculcate desired attitudes and behaviours in the people.

One of man's activities that work well with the media happens to be politics which depends very much on negotiation and mobilization. For any group of people to set up a government, especially in societies with democratic disposition, the ideologies of the group and promises are built into radio and television programmes as well captured in newspaper and magazine, news stories, features, advertorials and direct advertisements among others. Mainstream media organisations are usually beehive of activities during political transition periods with a lot of stories to be written and told and a lot of money to be made in some cases. Increased activities during such period is because as Kogah (2008) has noted, "the media and political actors often work together but for disparate reasons, while political actors need the media for coverage of their meetings, campaigns, speeches and election results, the media often count on politicians to supply the needed revenue to fund the media.

The media, working for the good of the society particularly the sustenance of democracy in the case of Nigeria need to realize that the first reason for their existence is not profit-making, but that of serving as the watchdog of the society. Unfortunately, many people are of the opinion that rather than set agenda for those in the political class in a bid to ensuring good leadership, the media have

in many occasions been led by the political class in the direction they wish the media to go. Donohue et al and Olien et al (in Anthony and Thomas 2012) argue that the mass media somehow abandon their watchdog role by throwing away their autonomy to represent the interests of the populace and challenge those of dominant groups. They often times fail to remain the fourth realm of the estate and watchdog of government ethics, policies and excesses. In that sense "they function more along the lines of the guard dog metaphor" (p. 100).

Whether we are looking at publicly or privately owned media organisation, we are likely to be disappointed by the way public interest is served. Onanuga (1997) for instance does not believe that, that is expected of the media. On the other hand, Sewart (2002) argues that private media are not always fair and objective in reportage due to internal constrictions and external restrictions. At the end of the day, "the real choice is between an imperfect public sector and an imperfect private sector, not between an imperfect public sector and a perfect private sector (Ramarnurti and Vernon 1991, p. 207).

When the media, whether government-owned or privately owned begin to pursue their interests and without fairness, objectivity and genuine protection of the common interest of the society, what results is the type of discordance tune and the provision of platforms for hate campaigns as was evident during the 2015 elections in Nigeria. The ordinary citizens are then either thrown into confusion or divided along certain parochial lines that are orchestrated by the media. Because Nigeria is a pluralistic society with many social and power groupings, the media, rather than analyze and present issues, personalities and situations dispassionately are divided along these groupings. This is why Anthony and Thomas (2012) believe that the mainstream media often fail and disappoint the ordinary citizen which has resulted in public opprobrium. This then, according to Allen (2012), is why:

> Public criticism—if not outright
> cynicism—about the quality of news
> provided by the main-stream media
> institutions is widespread. Journalists
> themselves are more often than not seen
> to be troubled, some quietly lamenting
> the lost traditions of a once proud
> profession, others loudly resisting
> market-driven obsession with bottom
> line profitability (p. 11).

Citizen media and citizen journalism provide a ray of hope
in the face of doubts and disappointment over the way mainstream
media and journalism have served the society. Zukerman (2009)
observes that citizen media give the citizens the opportunity to
report news and respond to issues such as political crises, and that
from the experience of the citizens of Kenya in the 2007
presidential election, citizens and community organizers, have
discovered something to be proud of; which is the fact that citizens
develop the capacity to generate their own stories and images and
as Carpentier, Brabandar and Lammaerts (2009) observe, that
which they generate are "narrations with specific truth-claims,
while at the same time avoiding the (traditional) professional link
with mainstream media organisations" (p. 163).

Besides, just as Liu, Sutton, Hughes and Vieweg (2009)
have noted; citizen media technology have even turned the table
so that consumers are learning to become producers and they
appear to be having better control over media flow. "In an
increasingly digitally connected society, we see the rise of a
participatory culture that facilitates over a broader reach and in
new forms, activities of collective sense-making" (p. 44). In the
same vein, Allen (2012) observes that "There appears to be little
doubt—in the eyes of both advocates and writers alike – that
citizen reporting is having a profound impact on the forms,
practices and epistemologies of mainstream journalism, from the

international level through to the local" (p. 25).

As a result of the increasing popularity of citizen media practice, Usua (2013) conducted a study to assess the prospects of government owned media organisations and arrived at the conclusion that people see citizen media as reliable sources of news and even entertainment. Not only that, they rely on citizen media sources more than government-owned media organisations, believed to have credibility problems. There is also an issue with delay in the transmission of information because government owned media sometimes wait for clearance before publishing certain information. This make citizen media sources better options for the people. Therefore he concludes:

> Nigerians have already seen the potential of this new wave in the generation and dissemination of news and entertainment as another threat (besides privately-owned outfits) to government-owned media... if the media generally, including those in the liberal societies, are yet to develop adequate applications to withstand the challenge that citizen journalism has engendered, it can be concluded that… media organisations owned and controlled by governments are soon to face serious jeopardy (p. 161).

There is also the problem of access to rural settlements and difficult terrains in times of crises and disasters which make citizen journalism the only means of reporting such development and situations. In such situations citizens and victims who have even minimal technology become the only sources. This is the view expressed by Vis (2009) in the case of Hurricane Katrina which hit a part of America in 2005. Mainstream networks were seriously

affected and they "severely compromised normal journalistic routines of fact-checking" (p.66).

Notwithstanding the potential of citizen media in sharing quick and authentic information among citizens, as well as its empowerment of the people to tell their stories from their differing perspectives, a number of challenges are thrown up by the use of these media. Zuckerman (2009) for instance has observed that these technologies are not only useful in reporting and peace-making efforts; they are also handy for rumour-mongering and incitement to violence. He quotes a source inciting neighbours against one another in the aftermath of Kenyan presidential election crisis. Politicians especially in countries like Nigeria who go to the extent of killing and maiming will not be expected not to cash in on the strength of citizen media to perpetuate nefarious acts and to engage gullible youths to manipulate citizen media, to their advantage. This of course is the significance of a study which aims at finding out the implication of the use of citizen media in elections in a fledgling democracy.

Method of Study

The research method adopted for this study was the survey research technique. The instruments used were the questionnaire and focus group interview schedule. The survey was carried out in three states in South-South region of Nigeria namely; Rivers, Bayelsa and Akwa-Ibom states. A total of 400 respondents were surveyed using the questionnaire while a focus group discussion (FGD) made up of 6 participants was carried out in Port Harcourt. The group was made of 6 participants (two from each of the three states selected for the study viz: Port Harcourt, Yenagoa and Uyo. These participants were in these states during and after the elections and have clear understanding of the main theme of the research. The focus group discussion was conducted in the Seminar Room of the Department of Linguistics and

Communication Studies, University of Port Harcourt. The reason for the selection of the FGD venue was for convenience on the side of the researchers. For the administration of the instrument, a total of 150 respondents were reached in Port Harcourt and Uyo respectively while 100 respondents were reached in Yenagoa. The assignment of the copies of the questionnaire to each state was dependent on the population strength of the states.

Data gathered in both the administration of the questionnaire and the focus group discussions were presented and analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively in a bid to find answers to the research questions. Extant measurements were analyzed using the 5-point likert scale of 5 for very great extent, 4 for great extent, 3 for little extent, 2 for very little extent and 1 for no extent.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Data were gathered in this study through the administration of a set of questionnaire and a focus group discussion. Information gathered were collated and analyzed to assist the researchers provide answers to the research questions. A total of 400 copies of the questionnaire were administered to respondents in Port Harcourt, Uyo and Yenagoa. However, in all a total of 387 copies were retrieved and found useful for data analysis.

Research Question One
What citizen media platforms were frequently used by politicians and their supporters for the sharing of information during the 2015 General Elections?

First, the study sought to find out the citizens media platforms most frequently used by politicians and their supporters for sharing information about their political interests during the 2015 General Elections. This was the major concern of research question one.

Table 1:   Most frequently used citizen media platforms by politicians and their followers during the 2015 General Elections

Options	Respondents	%
Text message (SMS)	46	12
Facebook	333	86
Instagram	-	-
Twitter	8	2
Youtube	-	-
Whatsup	-	-
Total	**387**	**100**

Data gathered from the survey indicated that the most frequently used citizen media by politicians during the 2015 General Election was Facebook (86%) followed by text messages (SMS) (12%) via mobile phones and then Twitter (2%). The focus group discussants agreed that the most frequently used citizen medium during the election was Facebook. In fact they were unanimous on this observation.

As a follow up to the above, it was necessary to identify in specific terms, the ways in which the politicians and their supporters applied citizen media during the 2015 General Elections. This takes us to research question two.

Research Question Two
In what ways did politicians in South-South Nigeria and their followers use citizen media to sell themselves and their parties to the voting public during the 2015 General Elections?

Table 2: Purposes for which politicians used citizen media during the 2015 General Elections

Options	Respondents	%
Personal information campaign	155	40
Promoting campaign promises	128	33
Hate message drives	96	25
Party promotion	8	2
Political education	-	-
Total	**387**	**100**

The result of this quest indicated that citizen media were employed by politicians mainly for the purpose of providing personal information to their supporters and the general public (40%), promoting campaign promises (33%), hate message drives (25%) and party promotion (2%). From the focus group discussions it was gathered that the politicians and their supporters engaged citizen media to seek for party support and promote party candidates. However, some members said some candidates and groups attempted to use the media to exhort their supporters to go get their voters' cards to enable them cast their votes for them in the elections.

In further pursuit of the objectives of this study, it was necessary to establish the extent to which messages received through citizen media influenced voters' decision during the 2015 General Election. This desire necessitated the need for research question three.

Research Question Three
To what extent did the messages received through citizen media during the 2015 General Elections influence voting decision of the people of South-South region of Nigeria?

Table 4: **Extent to which messages receive through citizen media influenced the voting decision of people of South-South Nigeria in the 2015 General Elections**

Options	Extent	Respondents	%	WMS
5	To a very great extent	89	23	4.2
4	To a great extent	224	58	
3	To a little extent	20	5	
2	To a very little extent	27	7	
1	To no extent	27	7	
Total		**387**	**100**	

Result of the weighted mean score for the data gathered to understand and answer research question 3 is 4.2 which means that the messages received through citizen media to a great extent influenced the voting decision of people of South-South region of Nigeria during the 2015 General Elections.

Research Question Four
Did members of the public receive election results through citizen media before the official release of results by the Independent National Electoral Commission during the 2015 General Elections?

Table 4: **On whether the people of South-South region of Nigeria received the result of the 2015 General Elections through citizen media before the official announcement of the results by INEC**

Options	Respondents	%
Yes	263	**68**
No	124	**32**
Total	**387**	**100**

Data gathered on this showed that the majority of people received the result of the elections through citizen media during the 2015 General Election. Since this result was unofficial, it was necessary to find out the extent the election results received through citizen media during the 2015 General Election varied from the official result released by INEC. Data gathered on this was revealing. The focus group panel equally observed that the election results were posted online even when the counting was going on. They said this was a source of confusion for both the players and their supporters. There were unofficial announcements of election results from different polling booths and wards across the citizen media platforms. They said that sometimes the sources of these messages were unknown. This is in agreement with the data gathered from the respondents to this study from the 3 states, which suggested that most of the results released via citizen media platforms were from unverifiable sources.

Table 5: Extent election results released by unofficial sources on citizen media vary from the official election result released by INEC

Options	Extent	Respondents	%	WMS
5	To a very great extent	31	8	0.54
4	To a great extent	104	27	
3	To a little extent	182	47	
2	To a very little extent	39	10	
1	To no extent	31	8	
Total		**387**	**100**	

Information in table 5 indicates that there was a difference between the results received through citizen media and the official election results released by INEC. This is accounted for by the weighted mean score of 0.54 computed.

Research Question Five
What challenges associated with the use of citizen media were noticed in the South-South region during the 2015 General Elections in Nigeria?

Table 6: Challenges associated with the use of citizen media during the 2015 General Election

Options	Respondents	%
Unreliable Messages	116	30
Dissemination of unverified results	205	53
The use of hate messages	39	10
False information about politicians	27	7
Total	**387**	**100**

From the research it was observed that the major challenge associated with the use of citizen media during the 2015 General Election was the dissemination of unverified election results (53%). This was followed by the spreading of unreliable messages (30%).This finding is in agreement with the opinion of the FGD participants who said that citizen media were used to mudsling political opponents.

Results and Discussions
The study found that citizen media platforms were employed by politicians in the South-South region of Nigeria to share information during the 2015 elections. The social media platforms employed by the politicians and their supporters during the elections were Facebook, text messages (SMS) via mobile phones and Twitter. With this we can conclude that citizen media have become part of the communication platforms frequently used in Nigeria to share information including political messages. This finding was confirmed by the focus group discussants who unanimously agreed that the most frequently used citizen medium during the election was Facebook.

It was further revealed that the purpose of citizen media use was for provision of personal information to their supporters and the general public, promoting campaign promises; hate message drives and party promotion. One instructive trend thrown up by this research is the fact that no respondent agreed that the politicians used citizen media for the purpose of political education. The message in this is that a typical politician in South-South region of Nigeria seems not to be interested in political education of the masses but rather uses citizen media to pursue personal goals/interests. From the focus group discussions, it was gathered that the politicians and their supporters engaged citizen media to seek for party support and promote party candidates. However, some members said some candidates and groups attempted to use the media to exhort their supporters to go get their voters' cards to enable them cast their votes for them in the elections.

On the extent to which messages receive through citizen media influenced the voting decision of people of South-South region of Nigeria in the 2015 General Elections, it was found that citizen media have the power to influence voters' decision if well utilized by politicians. This means politicians can take advantage of the availability of citizen media to make political gains. However, to better understand the extent to which citizen media were engaged as sources of political information during the 2015 General Elections, it was indicated that citizen media were employed by politicians mainly for the purpose of providing personal information to their supporters and the general public, promoting campaign promises, hate message drives and party promotion.

The study sought to know if the people of South-South region of Nigeria received the result of the 2015 General Elections on citizen media before the official announcement of the results by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). The respondents agreed to have received the election

results from social media platforms before the official announcement by the Independent National Electoral Commission. The implication of this is that citizen media could be employed to publish elections results which are at variance with the official results. This publication of unauthorized results by unverifiable sources could be misleading, cause confusion and is capable of generating disaffection among opposing parties, candidates and their followers in the elections. The focus group panel equally observed that the election results were posted online even when the counting was going on. They said this was a source of confusion for both the players and their supporters. There were unofficial announcements of election results from different polling booths and wards across the citizen media platforms. They said that sometimes the sources of these messages were unknown.

To be able to ascertain the possible consequences of the transmission of information from unverifiable and unauthorized sources on citizen media on the growth of Nigerian democracy, it was pertinent to find out from the respondents the challenges associated with the use of citizen media during and after the 2015 General Elections. It was found that the major challenge associated with the use of citizen media during the 2015 General Election was the dissemination of unverified election results.Others include the spreading of unreliable messages, the use of hate messages and the spreading of false information about politicians. The focus group discussion panel pointed out that, in addition to the above, citizen media were used during the elections for mudslinging especially for spreading hate messages and as ancillaries for perpetuating violence and political killings. This finding is in agreement with the findings of Zuckerman (2009) who observed that these technologies are not only useful in reporting and peace-making, but also handy for rumour-mongering and incitement to violence. He cited a source which was said to be inciting neighbours against one another in the

aftermath of Kenyan presidential election crisis.

We see from the above that there were grave challenges associated with the use of citizen media during the last General Elections in Nigeria. The observation is that instead of directing citizen media towards positive end, politicians and their supporters employed the media as instrument of promoting selfish interests and propagating false and misleading information. The advent of citizen media was welcomed by all stakeholders in democratic process due largely, to the opportunity it provides for citizens to engage in media content creation and not just content consumption. The process has helped to democratize communication itself, the absence of which was seen as the bane of development in fledging nations such as Nigeria. From the foregoing we observe that this opportunity is abused during electioneering campaigns by the political class and their followers. This could be because the system is one without the necessary control mechanisms as applied to the conventional media practice.

Conclusion

From this paper we can draw the following conclusions. We observe that, politicians and their followers made use of citizen media to share information and news during the 2015 General Elections in Nigeria and that the citizen media platforms employed for this purpose during the elections include text messages from mobile phones, Facebook, and Twitter. Second, the politicians and their followers used citizen media to share personal information, promote campaign promises, spread hate messages about the opposition, promote party interest and never for political education.

The people exposed to these messages in South-South region of Nigeria agreed to have been influenced by some of these messages from the citizen media in their voting decisions, although the direction of this influence was not indicated. This

may mean that citizen media activities are likely to influence public opinion. Citizen media no doubt can serve very useful purposes if employed in the right direction. When the conventional media are rendered ineffective by bureaucratic bottlenecks and some other natural encumbrances, citizen media could be a veritable source of information on issues of public interest. This view is expressed by Vis (2009) in the case of Hurricane Katrina which hit a part of America in 2005. Mainstream networks were seriously affected and they "severely compromised normal journalistic routines of fact-checking" (p. 66).

However, in consideration of some of the observed negative activities the media have been put to, such as the dissemination of false and unverified election results and the other numerous challenges associated with the use of citizen media during election periods, one may conclude that if proper steps are not taken, the use of citizen media in information dissemination during elections may pose some grave dangers to the overall growth of the Nigerian democratic process. The result of this research has confirmed our earlier suspicion that politicians especially in countries like Nigeria who go to the extent of killing and maiming will not be expected not to cash in on the strength of citizen media to perpetuate nefarious acts and to engage gullible youths to manipulate citizen media, for their advantage.

Recommendations

1.   Policy makers and digital media experts should devise means of controlling communication activities on citizen media platforms. This will help check some of the negative communication practices of all those who employ the platforms for the purpose of information sharing and news dissemination.

2.   Politicians and all other agents of social change should be encouraged to use the citizen media platforms as tools of political education of both political players and their followers. This is consequent upon the fact as revealed in this study, that politicians use citizen media for all things but political education.

3.   Citizen should be advised to thread with caution, in pursuit of the political interest of their political candidates. They should be made to understand the negative consequences of disseminating false information such as unverified election results on citizen media and to desist from such acts.

4.   There should be efforts by organizations such as the National Orientation Agency to educate Nigerians on the need to put citizen media to positive use to help develop the nation on all spheres of her national life.

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