

SOCIAL MEDIA AND VOTERS' PARTICIPATION IN THE 2021 GOVERNORSHIP ELECTION IN ANAMBRA STATE, NIGERIA.

Cosmas Anayochukwu Nwankwo¹, Oluebube Rita Nwafor², MacDonald Isaac Kanyangale³
Nkoli Augustina Chendo⁴

¹Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Nigeria
ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3135-7788>

²Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Nigeria
<https://orcid.org/0009-0008-3555-179x>

³University of KwaZulu Natal, South Africa

ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2259-1449>

⁴Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Nigeria
ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0008-3555-179x>

ca.nwankwo@coou.edu.ng¹

j.cosmaris@gmail.com¹

ekekarita1996@gmail.com²

kanyangalem@ukzn.ac.za³

na.chendo@coou.edu.ng⁴

ABSTRACT

Objective: The study examined the social media and voters' participation in the 2021 governorship election in Anambra State, while operationalising the social media with facebook and X.

Methodology/approach: A survey research design was used in the study. The study was conducted in Anambra State. Multiple regression analysis was employed to assess research hypotheses while the significance level for the research hypotheses was set at 0.05.

Originality/Relevance: Previous studies on social media and voters participation portrays contradictory results on whether facebook and X significantly affect voters participation or not formed the gap in this study.

Main results: The study found that Facebook has significant effect on voters' participation in the 2021 governorship election in Anambra State. X" (Formerly known as Twitter) has no significant effect on voters' participation in the 2021 governorship election in Anambra State, Nigeria.

Social /management contributions: The study recommended that in order to avoid flaws and maximize the inherent benefits of technology in the election process, governments should try to monitor, moderate, or regulate Facebook and other platforms. Furthermore, the public must be educated on the use of "X" platforms for political ends, particularly with regard to young. This campaign should be led by the political parties, who should make use of resources like the mass media, the National Orientation Agency, and State and Federal Ministries of Information, among others.

Keywords: social media, voters' participation, "X", Facebook, governorship election

INTRODUCTION

Social media is becoming the most effective way to engage Nigerians, particularly the younger generation, and a more comfortable venue for campaigns. Even before the election, Aghogho (2020) stated that more people were aware of the new electoral laws. Speculations on social media have motivated even those who do not vote or have not been voting. It allowed for PVC sensitization, provided a public forum for election observation and information exchange, and provided access to a broader, more complete picture of user attitudes in Nigeria and the Diaspora. Social media has also led to a rise in the quantity of organized political pages and

groups on the internet. These groups allow for online meetings to take place from any location, which promotes political participation and the exchange of ideas (Adeniyi, 2023).

Online social media has grown in significance as a channel of interaction and information sharing for Nigeria's INEC with its populace and voters at large. The way that citizens and voters obtain information has changed significantly as a result of INEC using social media as a channel for communication. Previously, citizens and voters relied on traditional media or one-way communication channels; at present, they make use of mobile-based platforms that facilitate communication and user-generated content (UGC) exchanges in both directions.

Social media (SM) is rapidly becoming a vital resource for establishing connections with various individuals, organizations, and businesses (Nwankwo, Kanyangale & Abugu, 2019). Shamsu, Bahtiar and Suhaini (2017) asserts that social media is a vehicle for promoting both private and public dialogue. Furthermore, it provides news and unique opportunities for elected officials, public servants, and community leaders to share information and be informed by the public. Several of the leading companies and industries use social media as the cutting edge of their marketing strategies to interact with both present and future consumers. In addition to identifying and resolving issues with marketing and advertising tactics, the cooperation of different social media platforms is critical to voter engagement (Tsimonis & Dimitriadis, 2014).

The distinction between online and offline content is still hazy for all social media sites. For instance, a letter ostensibly signed by the INEC spokesman and on official INEC letterhead was made public during a recent election campaign cycle. It stated that the APC presidential candidate was the subject of a drug-related inquiry. This letter, however, was a fake that started on WhatsApp, spread swiftly through social media, and was read aloud on national broadcasting networks like Arise TV. Neither the INEC announcement nor any inquiry ever took place. It became a mainstream story because of the haste with which the news was still breaking, maybe due to partiality in the media. Although the provided example is an exception, mainstream media frequently finds inspiration for new content from social media. Since this is what the public wants to hear, it is expected to find topics that are trending on "X" (formerly known as Twitter) and being argued on morning or evening debate shows. In this way, media outlets are integrating the internet into both people's homes and traditional media. Additionally, they invite propaganda specialists into their studios when they pose as experts and invite so-called "political consultants." These people are frequently compensated to spread conspiracy theories, sell half-truths, or try to justify inaccurate information found online (Aghogho, 2020). The 2021 Governorship election in Anambra State started in a perplexing way as many inflammatory statements and desperations occasioned by internal party conflicts, and violence mobilisations such as "Unknown Gun Men" (UGM) and the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) were reported (Situation Room, 2021). The researcher observed that due to these reported violent attacks and fears of possible attack, the campaigns in Anambra 2021 did not start on time. This led to the use of other political campaigns means such as radio/TV messaging, bulk sms, "Facebook, "X" (Formerly known as Twitter), blogs, WhatsApp collectively referred to as social media" among others and supporters informally wooing people within their locale as against the conventional public gatherings and branded cars and wears. Hence, much of the campaign issues were centred on attaining power and verbal attacks on the personality of candidates instead of development pledges on social service issues, economic activities, security and general quality of life of the people of Anambra State. Hence, even political aspirates that were not on any social media were

forced to have one or more. This motivated the researcher to determine how this use of social media affected the 2021 governorship election in Anambra State.

Moreover, to build a robust democracy, public mobilization has a significant impact on how votes are cast. To engage in the political process, especially during elections and matters of governance, citizens must be mobilized. With the emergence of the Internet, leading to a barrage of social media, various authors have identified new possibilities and platforms for mobilizing citizens (Fuchs, 2014; Arthur, 2012). Several studies have argued that a more democratic society may arise from the use of these new media (Anduiza, Cantijoch & Gallego, 2009; Arthur, 2012). Moreover, Fatema, Yanbin, and Fugui (2022) investigated the influence of social media on the communication between voters and politicians by means of the moderating function of political phrases. The findings indicate that social networking sites and politics have a favorable and significant impact on the relationships between politicians and citizens. Sumaira, Ummel, Bushra, and Rizwan (2015) investigated the impact of social media on political efficacy and vote intention at the University of Gujarat. The results demonstrated that men are more successful than women in politics. In Rivers State, Nigeria, Nwador, Dike, and Origbo (2020) examined the connection between social media marketing and voters' participation in politics. Among other things, the study discovered that social media marketing significantly affects voter participation in politics.

Conversely, Fujiwara, Müller, and Schwarz (2024) examined the impact of social media on elections using data from the United States. Election-related effects on the use social media were found to be limited, and "X" (formerly known as Twitter) decreased vote share. A study on the impact of social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter on the political engagement of the millennial Muslim population was conducted by Miawati and Kiki (2022). It was found that Facebook as a social media platform does not positively or significantly affect the political participation. In a similar vein, Lee, Nanz, and Heiss (2022) investigated platform-dependent effects related to accidental viewing of political news and its impact on political awareness and participation. The findings demonstrate that Twitter has no significant effect on political participation or knowledge. From the foregoing, it can be seen that research on social media has produced contradictory results. Additionally, a large body of research has been conducted on the impact of social media on various other variables, but not the Anambra State, Nigeria, 2021 governorship election. These other variables include political communication, voting behaviour, political slogans, organizational performance, and political marketing. Thus, the gap in the current investigation. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to ascertain how social media particularly facebook and X affects voters' participation in 2021 governorship election in Anambra State, Nigeria.

However, the study is guided with the formulated null hypotheses below:

Ho: Social media (facebook and X) have no significant effect on voters' participation in 2021 Governorship election in Anambra State.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Social Media

Politics is heavily reliant on social media (Boulianne, 2020; Jungherr, 2016). Milakovich (2010) asserts that social media is a tool for boosting public engagement in politics. It is an online platform which helps voters or citizens to create and share information and ideas towards fostering diverse forms of political expression and engagement. This can be achieved through

text, videos and photos. Effective political marketing is ensured in any political climate through the use of social media to generate, interact with one another, and provide value for stakeholders (Tuten & Solomon, 2013). Following Barack Obama's online presidential campaign in 2008, the academic space saw growth (Newman, 2016; Miller, 2013). In a similar vein, our systematic literature assessment shows that Donald J. Trump's presidential campaign had a major influence on the field's research. But during his 2004 presidential campaign, Howard Dean became the first to successfully incorporate social media (Lees-Marshment, 2014; Chendo & Oguanobi, 2021). Social media, as opposed to earlier media, offers political branding a direct and uncensored communication avenue. They enable political brands to engage voters with pertinent content, mobilize votes, raise money for their campaigns, communicate with their followers and the public, and market their brand through social media advertisements.

Furthermore, social media gives political brands a powerful tool for co-creation and co-branding. Examples of this type of co-creation and co-branding include Bernie Sanders' #My Bernie Story and Donald Trump's #MAGA challenge. Significantly, politicians can close the psychological gap with voters thanks to social media (Vergeer, Hermans & Sams, 2010). Research indicates that voters' opinions and behaviors are influenced by social media (Hultman, Ulusoy & Oghazi, 2019; Bode & Dalrymple, 2016). Voters have a voice and connect with each other on social media. As a result, political marketing on social media demands a different strategy than it does on traditional media. In particular, an interactive and relational strategy is required for political marketing on social media (Cacciotto, 2017; Harris & Harrigan, 2015; Lees-Marshment, 2014).

According to recent research, social media demands politicians to take a social and personal stance that is based on the values that both they and their constituents share (Abid & Harrigan, 2020). Nonetheless, a substantial corpus of research indicates that politicians and political parties generally have either failed to adopt the social media-required attitude or are unwilling to do so (Akosua 2020). According to my own perspective, social media platforms are digital instruments that facilitate audience engagement, brand building, revenue growth, and website traffic. Creating content that piques readers' focus and motivates them to circulate it with their social media communities is the standard approach to using social media in marketing. From one person to another, a corporate message is transmitted, rather than emanating from the brand or company, and since it originates from a reputable source, it is probably more likely to be absorbed. Social media has evolved into a medium that is freely accessible to all users of the Internet, offering businesses chances to increase consumer and brand awareness. Moreover, social media offers companies an inexpensive venue for launching marketing campaigns (Aman et al . (2022). Based on the advancement of social media in politics, particularly in Nigeria, voters can collaborate on political objectives, communicate information, and create social and political relationships through a variety of technologies made available by the internet.

Facebook

Facebook is one of the most widely utilized social networking sites in the world. Facebook ranked as the fourth most popular internet service globally in 2020 with around 2.8 billion monthly active users. It was also announced as the mobile application that had been downloaded the most in the preceding ten years. Facebook is accessible from several internet-connected devices at once. For those who use Facebook, creating an account and filling it out with personal data is the first step. Since 2011, the content provided by users is stored on their own profile page/timeline (Gayomali, 2011; Knibbs, 2015).

Users can post texts, photos, and videos to share publicly or privately with pals throughout the globe. Facebook users can join groups, follow websites related to their interests, and message each other secretly using instant messaging. It transformed the way individuals were connected on a worldwide scale and provided them with a means of sharing their own thoughts, perspectives, and data with the audience of their choice. Public personalities, including politicians, began exploring this new medium for information transmission and story fabrication as early as 2008 (Carlisle & Patton, 2013; Skogerbø & Krumsvik, 2015). Facebook's ability to provide a cutting-edge platform for advertisements with a large audience has led to political marketing and communication becoming the new standard everywhere (Bossetta, 2018). One of the main players in American technology, Meta Platforms, is the owner of Facebook, an electronic social media and social interaction platform used in this study.

There is a thing on Facebook called Facebook pages which are places on the internet where companies, political parties, organizations, celebrities, public servants, professionals of all stripes, and private citizens go to promote themselves to the Facebook community. It offers an effective collection of web resources for interacting with voters and consumers. Since 2006, Facebook has reached users worldwide as well as other universities, companies, and businesses (Dunay & Krueger, 2010). The user base is still gradually increasing. As a result, Solaja and Odiaka (2010) claimed that the growing number of Facebook users provides a solid foundation for the platforms' acceptance for marketing objectives. With 97,000 Nigerian Facebook members, President Goodluck Jonathan in 2010 claims to have the largest fan base in the country, and other politicians have used Facebook for political purposes. Adebija, referenced in Ofose (2010), claims that due to the president's Facebook fan page's incredible traffic, both domestic and foreign firms might think about running an advertisement there. In order to get real-time feedback on their brand, goods, and services, Facebook can interact with both consumers and non-customers on platforms that they are familiar with. Facebook also provides focused marketing campaigns to particular client segments in order to improve services and develop new products (Wmworia, 2010).

“X” (formerly called Twitter)

One of the most popular social networking sites in the world, "X," was once known as Twitter and is utilized by politicians, common users, and large corporations. Even governmental officials frequently use this channel to share their policy stances on several significant issues. Since its launch in 2006, "X"—formerly known as Twitter—has experienced substantial growth over the past ten years. An estimated 100 million "X" users—previously known as Twitter users—posted 340 million tweets daily by 2012. Furthermore, according to The Engineering Behind X's New Search, the social networking site handled about 1.6 billion searches. There were 330 million "X" (previously known as Twitter) users as of early 2019. In the digital age, it is becoming a necessary tool for communication.

Twitter, formerly known as "X," has become a prominent platform for political communication. It has disrupted the old communication landscape, which mostly featured mass media and political players with minimal citizen participation (Micó & Casero-Ripollés, 2014). The rise of "X," formerly known as Twitter, as a communication platform where the general public can freely interact with political actors without first using media filters for communication has reduced the one-directional nature of information by the political parties (Chadwick, 2013). In addition, the politician uses "X," formerly known as Twitter, a significant social media platform, to talk about politics, public policy, and neighbourhood initiatives. The politician, for instance,

uses "X" (previously Twitter) to interact with the public, fulfill requests, and disseminate information. Originally called Twitter, "X" has developed into a prominent forum for political discourse. The relationship between citizens, politics, and the style of engagement that binds these groups together is known as political communication (Abubakar, Mohamad, Halim, Subramaniam, & Choo, 2018). "Pathos, ethos, modes of persuasion, and logos serve as the foundation for the connections". This study defines "X" (previously known as Twitter) as a free social networking site where users exchange short messages, or tweets. These tweets which can be links, images, videos, or text. Users who wish to use "X" (formerly known as Twitter) must have a smartphone or internet connection in order to utilize the app or website.

Theoretical Framework

The Uses and Gratification Theory

The Uses and Gratification Theory was first proposed by Elihu Katz, Jay Blumler and Michael Gurevitch in 1974 (Katz, Blumler & Gurevitch, 1974). According to the theory, people select the media they consume based on the satisfactions they hope to derive from their choices. As stated by the uses and gratifications theory, people are driven and actively involved in choosing the media they consume. The two underlying tenets of the idea are that media consumers actively choose the media they consume and that they are conscious of the reasons behind their choices. The recipient of media messages is therefore seen by the theory as actively influencing the effect process; he chooses, attends to, perceives, and retains the media messages according to his requirements and beliefs. This suggests that "to satisfy their needs and gratify their interests and motives, citizens should actively choose and use specific forms of media content." The viewpoint of the media consumer is adopted by the uses and gratifications standpoint. Based on these tenets, the theory delineates five central assumptions: consumption of media is influenced by personal social and psychological variables; people choose media according to their expectations that it will fulfill particular needs and wants; media competes with other forms of communication, particularly face-to-face communication, for selection and use in satisfying a variety of needs and desires; and people are typically in control of media, meaning that messages in the media do not have particularly strong effects on people. As stated above, the uses and gratifications theory emphasizes that the individual has more power than the media and that the relationship between the media and its effects is mediated by individual differences. This relationship is influenced by both the media user and the media material itself.

As a result, when it comes to this study, social media facilitates involvement since it allows for one-on-one communication between advertising and customers. Since politicians and other stakeholders voluntarily construct their Facebook pages and Twitter accounts, it is implied that they are active social media users. The parties decide to use social media rather than other resources to achieve their objectives and wishes. Essentially, the political parties open up an account on Facebook or Twitter for a certain purpose. That is, promoting a good or service requires interacting with consumers. For other users, it can be the need to establish personal connections with friends, the necessity to use a service or party that has been promoted on such social media platforms, or simply the desire to hear about a party that piques their interest. The theory is relevant to our study because it explains why consumers choose to watch advertisements on Facebook and Twitter, possibly because they anticipate receiving satisfaction from such messages. On the other hand, people who disregard the messages might not find them satisfying. Thus, it may be inferred that the users are motivated to supply and update highly

specific personal information that they would probably decline to provide in other circumstances due to the expectation of reward.

METHODOLOGY

A survey research design was used in the study. The goal of a survey research design is to characterize the association or influences existing among or between the variables by gathering data from a sample of an interest population. The study was conducted in Anambra State. Anambra State is located in the southeast region of Nigeria. The participants of the study were all of the registered voters in Anambra State, Nigeria which comprised of three senatorial zones. The researcher selected one local government area (LGA) from each senatorial zone, for a total of three Local Government Areas. Onitsha North 159,292, Njikoka 103,721, Orumba South 75,121 making the population a total of 338,134. The sample size of 399 was used for the study and derived using Taro Yamane (1967) formula. The researchers employed primary sources of data for this study. A structured questionnaire was the data collection tool utilized in the present study. Face validation of the research instrument was use to make sure the questionnaire was well-written, clear of ambiguities, and captured the main ideas it was intended to measure. Three experts—two from the Department of Marketing and one from the Department of Business Administration—performed the face validation of the research instrument. Using Spearman's rank correlation coefficient, the data generated from these two contacts were compiled, compared, and correlated, resulting in a reliability coefficient value of 0.83. Multiple regression analysis was employed to assess research hypotheses while the significance level for the research hypotheses was set at 0.05. Version 20 of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to conduct the analysis. Accept the null hypothesis and reject the alternative hypothesis if the p-value is higher than 0.05. Accept the alternative hypothesis and reject the null hypothesis if the p-value is less than 0.05.

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

Table 4.1: Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Demographic Variables	Particulars	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Gender	Male	172	49.6
	Female	175	50.4
Marital Status	Single	70	20.2
	Married	234	67.4
	Widowed/Divorced/Separated	43	12.4
Educational Level	No formal studies	36	10.4
	Primary	27	7.8
	Post-primary	53	15.3
	Tertiary	231	66.6
Age	18-34 Years	179	51.6
	35-49 Years	74	21.3
	50-69 Years	84	24.2
	70 Year-Above	10	2.9

Source: Field Survey 2024

The demographic data of the sample of registered voters used in this study is displayed in Table 4.1 above. According to the table, 172 respondents depicting 49.6% of the total are males, and

175 respondents depicting 50.4% of the total, are females. The table shows that out of the three hundred and forty-seven (347) respondents, seventy (70) respondents which represent 20.2% are single, while two hundred and thirty-four (234) of the respondents representing 67.4% are married, and the remaining 43 respondent, which represent 12.4% are widowed/divorced/separated. According to the table, 36 respondents comprising 10.4% had no formal education while twenty-seven (27) of the respondents which represent 7.8% percent have primary school education, whereas fifty-three (53) respondents which represent 15.3% had post-primary school education, and two hundred and thirty-one (231) which represent 66.6% have tertiary education. Moreover, the respondents' age range is shown in table 4.1 above. According to the distribution, 179 respondents representing for 5.1% of the sample, are within the ages of 18 and 34, 74 respondents comprising 21.3%, are within the ages of 35 and 49, 84 respondents, representing 24.2%, are between the ages of 60 and 69, and 10 respondents comprising 2.9%, are 70 years of age and above.

Multiple Regression Analysis

Table 4.2 Multiple Regression Model Summary

The table below is the multiple regression analysis result.

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Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Model Summary ^b		Change Statistics			Durbin-Watson	
				Std. Error of the Estimate	R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2		Sig. F Change
1	.719 ^a	.516	.514	1.19694	.256	63.524	2	345	.000	1.643

a. Predictors: (Constant), X, FZB

b. Dependent Variable: VOP

Table 4.2 shows the model summary results and that all the study variables were captured and entered for regression analysis. The overall relationship (R) between the dependent and independent variables is 0.719, according to the results. The implication is that positive correlation exists linking social media and voters' participation in the 2021 governorship election in Anambra State. The value of 0.516 (51.6%) is the coefficient of determination (R^2), which quantifies the degree of correlation between the independent and dependent variables. This suggests that the independent variables—Facebook (FZB) and Twitter (X) explain 51.6% of the variation in voters' participation. Thus, other factors that influence the dependent variable but are not included in the regression model employed in this study account for approximately 48.4% of the total. The regression model suited the data used in this study well, as indicated by the coefficient of determination, which also demonstrates the significant effect that the independent variables have on the dependent variables. This is corroborated by the adjusted R^2 value of 0.514, which shows that, after corrections, the independent variables in this study could explain 51.4% of the variability in the dependent variable. Using Durbin-Watson statistics, the model was examined for autocorrelation. The Durbin-Watson statistics have a value of 1.643 in Table 4.2 which depicts that the model's variables are not auto-correlated and that it may be used to make accurate predictions.

Table 4.3: Multiple Regression Regression ANOVA Result

		ANOVA ^a				
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	182.018	2	91.009	63.524	.000 ^b
	Residual	530.089	345	1.433		
	Total	712.107	347			

a. Dependent Variable: VOP

b. Predictors: (Constant), X, FZB

Table 4.3 demonstrates that the multiple regression model's overall significance is depicted by the F-statistics value of 63.524 and the corresponding p-value of 0.000. This finding demonstrates that every independent variable in the study had a considerable combined impact on the dependent variable. This suggests that the social media platforms taken into account in this research namely Facebook (FZB) and Twitter (X) significantly affect voters' participation in the 2021 governorship election in Anambra State.

Table 4.4: Coefficients of the Model

The impact of each independent or explanatory variable on the dependent variables is represented by the t-statistics and probability value from the regression result. The table below displays a summary of the outcome.

Table 4.4: t-Statistics and Probability Value from the Regression Result (Multiple Regression Coefficients Results)

Model		Coefficients ^a		Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	Sig.
		Unstandardized Coefficients				
		B	Std. Error			
1	(Constant)	1.475	.253		5.829	.000
	FZB	.466	.053	.404	8.740	.000
	X	.204	.042	.224	.844	.510

a. Dependent Variable: VOP

The coefficients and probability values for each individual variable are displayed in Table 4.4. Facebook has a probability value of .000 and a regression t-value of 8.740. This suggests that Facebook significantly and positively influences voters' participation. Regression t-test results for "X" (formerly known as Twitter) show a 0.844 value with a probability value of 0.510, suggesting an insignificant but positive effect on voters' participation. Furthermore, the beta values of the standardized coefficients shows that the β -values of 0.404 and 0.224 were obtained for Facebook (FZB) and twitter (X) respectively. This indicates that Facebook (40.4%) has the strongest effect on voters' participation of the 2021 governorship election in Anambra State, followed by "X" (Formerly known as Twitter) (22.4%) respectively.

Test of Hypotheses

Here, t-statistics and the significance values of the individual variables in the regression result were used to examine the two hypotheses that were developed in this study. Finding the

significance of each independent or explanatory variable's effect on the dependent variables is the main objective here.

Test of Hypothesis One

H₀₁: Facebook has no significant effect on voters' participation in the 2021 governorship election in Anambra State

Facebook shows statistical significance with a t-statistic of 8.740, β -value of 0.404, and probability value of 0.000, all of which are below the predetermined significance level of 0.05. As a result, we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative, which claims that Facebook significantly influences Anambra State voters' participation in the 2021 gubernatorial election. This implies that Facebook has significant effect on voters' participation in the 2021 governorship election in Anambra State.

Test of Hypothesis Two

H₀₂: "X" (Formerly known as Twitter) has no significant effect on voters' participation in the 2021 governorship election in Anambra State

The probability value and t-statistics in the tables that follow are used to test this hypothesis. With a t-statistic of .844, β -value of 0.224, and probability value of 0.510, "X" (formerly known as Twitter) is statistically insignificant because it exceeds the predetermined significance level (0.05). As a result, we accept the null hypothesis, which states that "X" (formerly known as Twitter) has no significant effect on the participation of voters in the Anambra State 2021 gubernatorial election. We reject the alternative hypothesis. This implies that "X" (Formerly known as Twitter) has not significant effect on Anambra State voters' participation in the 2021 governorship election.

Discussion of Findings

The first specific objective is to ascertain Facebook's effect on voters' participation in the 2021 governorship election in Anambra State. The field survey finding on the effect of Facebook on voters' participation showed that a good numbers of the respondents agree that Facebook has increased their awareness of different political candidates as depicted on the regression result table above. This study found that Facebook has a positive and significant influence on voters' participation in the 2021 governorship election in Anambra State. The regression reveals that an increase in Facebook awareness is significantly influenced by a unit rise in voters' participation. This supposes that the ability to assess the social media (Facebook) will increase voters' participation. This finding could be due to Facebook's vast user base in Anambra State which makes it a powerful platform for political mobilization and awareness, thereby enhancing political participation. Also, it can be believed that Facebook's algorithmic curation of content (programme/content filtering) can create and reinforce opinions which significantly influence voters' participation. This lends credence to the claims made by the Theory of uses and gratification by Katz, Blumler and Gurevitch (1974), which argues that people select the media they consume based on the satisfactions they hope to derive from their choices which invariably affects their objectives and beliefs (voters' participation). The finding is in line with Lakshmi (2022) who discovered that social media, specifically Facebook, Google, and You Tube, has an impact and significant influence on Indian politics. Similarly, this is in line with Chiamogu, Obikeze, Chiamogu and Odikpo, (2021) who found that social media like Facebook have significant effect and positive relationship on creating social and political awareness of political candidates among voters in Nigeria. This finding also agreed with the finding of Fatema, Yanbin

and Fugui (2022) who asserted that social networking sites like facebook, instagram among others have a positive and significant effect on the association between politicians on citizens in Pakistan. Also, in line with this study, Saba and Jinnah (2018) discovered that social media can effectively influence young voters' voting behavior and provide them with political knowledge. Similarly, Shamsu, Bahtiar, and Suhaini (2017) found that among young people in Bauchi city, Facebook use, the quality of information, and political interest significantly correlate with online political activity. Similarly, Ezema and Ezema (2023) discovered that political mobilization and participation are influenced by the usage of social media platforms like Facebook and WhatsApp. The results corroborated those of Sunday, Erude, and Aliogo (2023), who highlighted the impact of social media—such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and the like—on Nigerian elections by increasing political engagement and awareness. Additionally, Ofonmbuk, Arugu, and Ucheobi (2020) found that given how frequently people use Facebook and Twitter for political debates, INEC ought to devote these platforms to voter education in order to increase citizens' involvement in elections. Nonetheless, this result contradicts the findings of Miawati and Kiki (2022), who discovered that Facebook's influence as a social media platform had no appreciable and beneficial impact on the political engagement of the Muslim millennial population.

The second specific objective was to ascertain the effect of “X” (Formerly known as Twitter) on voters’ participation in the 2021 governorship election in Anambra State. The field survey findings on the effect of “X” (Formerly known as Twitter) on voters’ participation showed that even though “X” increases voters’ knowledge of political candidates, a good numbers of the participants disapproves that Political messages on “X” influences their choice of candidate during the election. Also, the study also revealed that voters do not engage with political content on “X” by liking, sharing and commenting during the election. Similarly, “X” do not helps voters to be politically more active during the elections and do not motivate voters to vote in election through text-based contents and memes. The regression revealed that the null hypothesis was accepted and the alternative hypothesis was rejected. As a result, this study showed that "X" (formerly known as Twitter) has an insignificant but positive effect on voters' participation for the Anambra State gubernatorial election in 2021. The reason for this finding may be due to character limitation in “X” (Formerly known as Twitter) which limits political discussions and engagement. Moreover, the researcher observed that most of the young people within the State preferred to use other social media platforms but “X” due to their inability to navigate the interface of the “X” App. This result is consistent with that of Lee, Nanz, and Heiss (2022), who discovered that Twitter has no significant effect on political participation or knowledge. This result disproves earlier empirical research suggesting that "X" influences voters' participation and election outcomes positively. For example, Montague, Gazal, and Wiedenbeck (2019) suggested that social media platforms like "X" have a significant and favourable influence on political participation. Additionally, Zoaka (2021) discovered a significant and affirmative impact of Twitter on Nigerian citizens' involvement in general elections, hence overturning the results of this investigation. Comparably, the results of this study were not supported by Nyamanya, Omari, and Nyanga'u (2017), who found that employee performance is impacted by "X," LinkedIn, and WhatsApp. The results of this study also conflicted with those of Agbim, Etumnu, and Iredibia (2023), who found that Twitter can be a useful tool for political mobilization and increased election participation. In contrast to the results of this study, Ahmad,

Ersoy, and Dambo (2020) found links between political actors' use of Twitter and political communication during general elections and political discourse.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The study comes to the conclusion that the respondents who were chosen for the study use social media to make political decisions. Apolitical citizens' preference for political discourse has been influenced by both participation in elections and media coverage. Additionally, Facebook and "X," are examples of social media platforms that have opened up new channels for engagement that enable the general public to connect and participate in contemporary forms of political participation. Therefore, the researchers recommend that in order to avoid flaws and optimize the advantages that technology brings to the process of democracy, the government must endeavor to monitor, moderate, or regulate Facebook platforms. Politicians, political parties, and the people who support them ought to be warned about posting inappropriate content on Facebook. It is also advised that laws and penalties be established for these kinds of actions. It is necessary to frequently educate the public, especially young people, on the use of "X" (formerly known as Twitter) platforms for political goals. The National Orientation Agency, state and federal Ministries of Information, the mass media, and other resources should be used by the political parties to lead this campaign.

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