

Facebook and Governance: Audience Perception, Believability and Use of Its Political Messages in Anambra State

Cornelius Aghadiegwu Ukwueze, Ph.D

Senior Lecturer, Department of mass communication, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Anambra state
Nigeria

Julius Chibuikwe Nwosu

Department of mass communication, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Anambra state Nigeria

Abstract

There is no doubt that the new media heralded a dawn of technological advancement which certainly altered the way things were done in the media realm, this change did not only affect the way news and other media products are packaged, but the relationship between media and politics, political campaigns, issues of governance and so on. Interestingly, Facebook, one of the popular platforms of social media has been identified as a tool for political participation. Using a survey of 400 persons drawn from Anambra State as a focal point, the researchers examined the audience perception, believability and the extent of use of political messages on the Facebook. The study came up with the following findings: that the audience in Anambra state relied on the Facebook as a source of political messages, that they did not perceive these political messages from the Facebook as credible, and/or reflection of what they say, but more as propaganda statements. That Facebook users in Anambra State do not believe these political messages and finally that they employed the Facebook particularly as a tool for accessing political information and at other time for political education. The study is significant in that it will serve as a mirror to the political class on the effect of their various political messages on facebook. The study recommended among others that the political class while using facebook for political communication should repackage the contents to look credible and believable like those on the mainstream media.

Introduction

The rapidly advancing world of information technology has no doubt affected all spheres of life. Interestingly, one of the areas that have experienced this development is politics and governance (Dunu, 2013). Through its competency, some countries have successfully replaced authoritarian dispensations to democratic government. Apart from that, there is also easy access to information from around the world, which promotes liberty, governance, competition and choice. The emergence of these technological tools, according to Uzor (2011, p.35):

Has enabled a situation where individuals report their views on government, have ease of access and wide coverage; this technology in turn has enabled widespread political participation, check on governance, demand for probity, accountability and transparency from the government. The government on their part has made use of these tools to inform the public of their plans, policies and programmes.

Similarly, Kurian, (2015, p.55) lends his voice to the above submission this way:

The social media, especially, the Facebook, YouTube, Twitter etc, empower and unite people, while helping political leaders raise social and political issues, which help shape public opinion. In performing these functions, the social media actually seem to have succeeded in giving voice to the people, while providing a new platform that ensures increased participation between the people and the government.

Interestingly, with the connection to millions of people, the social media, (especially the Facebook) has favourably turned out to be a tool for governance; through it, information has become more readily available to the people more than ever before, removing to a large extent, barriers to collective action and therefore, promoting pluralism (Loader and Mercea 2012, p.33). Commenting on the far-reaching power of the social media in governance, Winsvold (2013, p.13) notes, "there is now the possibility of interactive communication that is expected to promote a discussion-based, deliberative, participatory democracy and good governance" It is against the above background that this study intends to examine the position of the social media (with specific focus on Facebook), vis-à-vis its co-penetration with governance, evaluating as it were, the perception, believability and use of the platform by the citizens of Anambra State.

Statement of Problem

In the modern day, the issue of governance has assumed the front burner as an indispensable requirement for social, economic and political developments (Nanda, 2006; Hout, 2007). The deployment of social media for political communication has also become a modern media menu across the globe. The emergence of social

media platforms like the Facebook, Twitter, Whatsapp, Instagram etc seems to have redefined the art of governance (Okunna & omenugha 2015, Ndolo, 2010; Ndolo &Ukwueze, 2015; Nwawuba, Odogwu, Nwosu and Duru, 2015; Fayemi 2015). Fayemi (2015, p.2) underscores the changing landscape of politics and governance as a results of intersperse between it and the social media. He argues, “The new media provides a platform that has come to revise the way we live, do business and even run the government. This it has done through e-commerce, e-government, e-learning and e-voting etc” What becomes very clear from the foregoing is the fact that the social media has not only become an ever more vital tool for convergence of people around the world, but a veritable tool for engaging with governments, governance, politics and public institutions” However, in the face of these possibilities, a number of questions have become pertinent; what extent has social media (with particular emphases on Facebook) really influenced governance? Yet again, the audience perception of political messages on the Facebook is one of the vital areas that need to be placed under inquiry, how has the audience and users of these Facebook messages perceived its messages; to what extent are such political messages on Facebook seen as truthful and or believable? These are particularly, the problems that precipitate this research work; incidentally, much has not been done to ascertain the issues raised here, especially, in Anambra State which happens to be the focal point of the study. The researchers consider this a serious gap in knowledge that calls for empirical examination. The essence of the study is therefore to investigate Facebook and governance, looking at audiences’ perception, believability and use of its political messages.

Objectives of the Study

The general objective of the study is to examine the audience perception, believability and uses of Facebook political messages in Anambra State. However, in more specific terms, the study sought the following objectives:

1. To determine the extent Facebook users in Anambra State rely on it for political messages.
2. To examine how Facebook users in Anambra State perceive its political messages.
3. To determine the extent that these Facebook users believe these political messages.
4. To determine what uses they make of political messages on Facebook.

Research Question

The following research questions were formulated to guide the study:

1. To what extent do Facebook users in Anambra State rely on it for political messages?
2. How do the users perceive political messages on Facebook?
3. To what extent do they believe these Facebook political messages?
4. What uses do they make of political messages on Facebook?

Hypotheses

H¹: There will be relationship between users’ believability and the use they make of Facebook political messages

H⁰: There will be no relationship between users’ believability and the use they make of Facebook political messages

H²: There will be relationship between users’ level of education and the use they make of Facebook political messages

H⁰: There will be no relationship between users’ level of education and the use they make of Facebook political messages

Review of Literature

Over the past decade, Nigeria’s Internet sector has been growing in leaps and bounds and the digital landscape greatly expanding. Nigeria is today ranked as having the largest number of Internet users in Africa (Fayemi, 2015). This astonishingly, is with over 43 million people maintaining online presence, representing 30% penetration in relation to the population of the country. Against this backdrop, there is no doubt that Nigeria has experienced a phenomenal growth in online activities in the past twelve years. Viewed also from the above submission, it might somewhat be instructive to note that a large percentage of these users - whether active or passive are new media users in one form or the other. Prominent among them are the Facebook users.

According to Moore, (2006, p. 16) “The Facebook forms part of the backdrop which government actors and change agents have leveraged on to build critical mass of people for social transformation and good governance - either towards electoral vigilance, good governance, public accountability and /or probity” Dunu (2013, p.10) notes that “The emergence of the new media created many opportunities and challenges in different climes of the society; it widened the horizon of economic, social and political frontiers” Against the above assumption, Nwodu (2015, p. 33) notes that “Facebook has provided a veritable platform where issues of governance are discussed and at the same time evaluated, it has not only given political voice to the masses, but revolutionized their attitude towards politics”

The Facebook is an online community; a social network service and website (www.facebook.com) launched in February, 2004. It was founded by four students of Harvard University; Mark Zuckerberg, Eduardo Severin, Andrew McCollum, Dustin Moscovitz and Chris Hughes (Odi, 2003). The Facebook was initially called the Facemash and restricted only to students of Harvard University. Later, it was extended to students in Boston University, the Ivy League Universities and some universities in Canada, with valid e-mail addresses that end with “edu”. Facemash software was written by Mark Zuckerberg. Later, the Facebook was opened to every member of the public of thirteen years and above in September, 2006. The platform became very popular few years after, breaking the record of membership of Social Media Networking Site; this was in July, 2010 (Hamilton, 2012; Snader, 2012). That same year, with the announcement of its five hundred million memberships, Facebook became a very popular social media platform to hit such mark. Today the Facebook is available in over 70 million languages. According to the mission statement of Facebook, “it is established to make the world more open and connected” Today, this social media platform seems to have lived up to expectation as Odi (2013, p.4) observes.

Facebook platform apparently seems to have lived up to its mission statement, this is so because the platform has become a tool for mutual interaction – helping people maintain current friends, find and reconnect to old ones, connect to family members, share information, ideas, pictures and experience with such people. The Facebook outside these possibilities has also facilitated political engagement and participation.

It was quite remarkable when in 2011; the 14th President of Nigeria, Dr. Goodluck Ebele Jonathan positioned himself by using the Facebook as a platform to carry out his political campaigns. This clever move political analysts note, paid off hugely as Goodluck became even more popular through this platform.

The concept of governance can be traced back to the ancient Greek period. Looking at the importance of governance and its essence in the ancient Greek, Aristotle was noted to have said, “that the State came into existence for the sake of mere life, but continued for the sake of good life” What the term “good life” tries to convey here is that for the State to ensure good leadership to the people, it must as a matter of utmost importance ensure good governance (Ashraf, 2014, p.41). commenting on the link between governance, Ashraf, (2014) notes, “There is a nexus of interrelationship between the media and governance, as media helps people know what is happening around the world, it more significantly, helps in socializing them with the value of pluralism” Ashraf lends more credence to this relationship thus:

Media plays such crucial role in protection of rights by making people aware of their rights. It also makes them to be vigilant in political developments around them and stimulates debates; it also draws attention to social evils; including institutional failures, corruption, inefficiency and illegal activities.

In the recent past however, the social media has been particularly valuable in countries where State control of the media is not flexible and unwilling to cater for dissenting voices (Balarabe, 2013, p.17). Social media networks such as Facebook, Twitter and other various blogging facilities have since 2004, been gradually lifting the veil of societies once accustomed to conservatism and silence. With the emergence of such social media platform like the Facebook, the art of governance has somewhat been redefined. It has not only become a tool for sensitization but conscientization, advancing political engagement and mobilization. The emergence of the Facebook and other social network facilities has as well created online platforms that serve as new political capital where people resort to and participate in a political discourse (Abubakar, 2011).

The campaign of President Barack Obama in 2008 successfully employed the social media, particularly, the Facebook, to connect with voters, mobilize an army of volunteers and amass a huge campaign war through contributors (Fraser and Dutta, 2008; Stelter, 2008), Obama’s intense reliance on the Facebook and American electorate’s belief in his political messages was thought to be critical to his victory (Dutta, 2008).

Review of Empirical Studies

Aruma (2008) surveyed some Local Governments Areas in Delta State with the research objective being to find out “how much the electorate are aware of the usefulness of the social media as a tool for accessing political information.” The study found that almost 100% thought the Internet is “relevant” to their gathering of information. However, the number that claimed to actually use the platform on their own initiative for reading stood at 40.1%. This contrasts with 61.9% who admitted being compelled to use them for the purpose of sourcing information for their other activities

Adeniran (2011) also discovered that a great number of the electorate in Ekiti State Nigeria “are yet to explore the huge potentials of social networking sites” on the Internet, especially during political campaigns and election periods. He compares the situation to what is obtainable in some Western countries where the public have been found to use these networks for sharing and accessing of political information, during electioneering periods. .

Johnson and Kaye (2009) carried out investigation on the credibility of blogs, websites that provide information on political issues, electronic mailing list bulletin and political chat room. The author made use of a descriptive survey method and used a sample size of 300 respondents. Employing the technological determinism theory, the researchers found out the following: that political oriented websites were perceived as most credible and believed among the listed social network sites. The study also found out that across the three year election sample (1996, 2000 and 2004) in which they compared the credibility and believability rating (i.e., online counterparts of traditional news magazines, radio, as well as online political oriented websites and online traditional version of newspapers) that the online traditional media were rated somewhat higher in credibility.

Zulquarnain and Hassan (2015) studied the perception of individuals about the credibility of social media in Pakistan. The principal objective of the study was to identify the impact of social media credibility on news regarding five dimensions: local, national politics, disaster and relief activities and entertainment news in the social media. Non probability convenience sampling method was employed and questionnaire used in collecting the data from the respondents

Data was collected from 164 respondents including male and female students of universities situated in Rawalpindi and Islamabad, Pakistan. The data was analysed using the Pearson correlation and regression analysis. The finding showed that there is a strong relationship between social media credibility and the use of news.

Similarly, Karamat (2016) explored the emerging role of the social media in political activism, looking closely at perceptions and practices. The researcher made use of the survey design and sample size of 300 respondents. He among other objectives sought to establish the level of empowerment given to the people due to awareness in the social media. The study found out that social media, especially the Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and some other social networks have been employed by political leaders and actors as a tool for governance. The author also acknowledged that the social media remains one tool that has been maximized in carrying out social activism. The implication of the above study is that the use of Facebook as a political platform remains indisputable.

In addition, Fannie, Akpan and Tarnongo (2013) investigated the utilization of the social media for mobilization of Nigeria youths during the 2011 General Elections. The survey research method was used with the questionnaire as the instrument of data collection. Sample size for study was 400 youths drawn from the ages of between 18 to 40 years. The findings revealed that the use of the social media has encouraged the effective participation of the youths in electoral and political issues; this appeared to have changed greatly, the seeming apolitical nature of the youths. The study recommended that social media and other media be complementary for the holistic mobilization of the youths for political mobilization.

Theoretical Perspective

The Uses and Gratifications theory originated from the functionalist perspectives of the mass media. The maiden research on the theory dates back in 1940s and focused on the reasons for the popular appeal of different radio programmes especially, the “soap operas” and quizzes and also looked at daily newspaper readings (Larzarfield, 1949, cited in Ukwueze, 2015).

In its simplest form, Uses and Gratifications theory posits that audience members have certain needs or that they are satisfied using both media and non media sources...The actual needs satisfied by the media are called gratifications (Wilmer &Dominick, 2007). The theory also holds that the audience’s use of the media is principally inspired and shaped by the benefits which it looks forward to get consuming specific media messages. Commenting further on the theory, Ndolo (2006, p. 33) notes:

It is a theory that is audience centered, asking what people do with the media rather than what they do to the people. Some of the adult needs satisfied by the media include surveillance, excitement, guidance, relaxation, tension reduction, social integration, entertainment, escape, self and personal identity, social contact and information acquisition

From the needs identified above, information acquisition which the users of Facebook benefit from is of essence. In other words, Facebook users in Anambra State make use of the platform to acquire political information and access messages necessary to guide them in their decisions on political issues. Based on the above assertion, the uses and gratifications theory has been considered apt for building a theoretical framework for this study.

In spite of the perceived merits, the uses and gratifications theory has been criticised for overlooking the fact that media consumption could also be non-deliberate or inspired by habit (Ukwueze, 2015 citing Rubin, 1985, p.9).

Methodology

The researchers used the survey method in the execution of the study. Survey was considered appropriate for this

study because it lends itself to the study of samples from a large population.

Area of the Study

The area of the study is Anambra State, South East Nigeria. According to the National Population Commission, (NPC, 2016), Anambra State has the population of 4.8 million, with 1.9 million people, who are active users of Facebook. The state is made up of three senatorial zones and 21 Local Government Areas

The Population of Study

The total population of study according to the record from National Communication Commission (NCC) is 1.7 million; these are mainly active Facebook users in Anambra State.

Sample Size and Sampling Technique

The sample size of the study is 400 respondents. This figure was arrived at using the suggestions from Comrey & Lee (1997) that in studying a large population, a sample size of 500 and above is excellent; 400 is very good; 300 is good, 200 is fair and 100 is poor. In line with the suggestion, the researcher settled for 400 as the working sample size for the study.

The multi stage sampling procedure was used to select the 400 respondents from the study population of 1.700000. At the first stage, one senatorial zone was selected through a lucky dip from the three senatorial zones in Anambra State. Anambra Central Senatorial zone emerged at this point.

The second stage involved the selection at the local government level. Using the simple random sampling method; two local governments were chosen from the senatorial district. Eventually, Awka South and Idemili Local Government Areas emerged.

At the third stage, the simple random sampling method was also used; the researcher again chose four towns from each of the local governments that emerged at the second stage. For Awka South Local Government Area, Amawbia, Awka, Nibo and Okpuno came forward, while Abatete, Nkpor, Obosi and Ogidi were chosen from Idemili North Local Government Area.

The Fourth stage of the sampling involved the selection of the study units, fifty (50) respondents were purposively selected from each of the eight towns based on convenience or those found to be Facebook users in those randomly selected areas. This eventually added up to 400 respondents.

Instrument for Data Collection

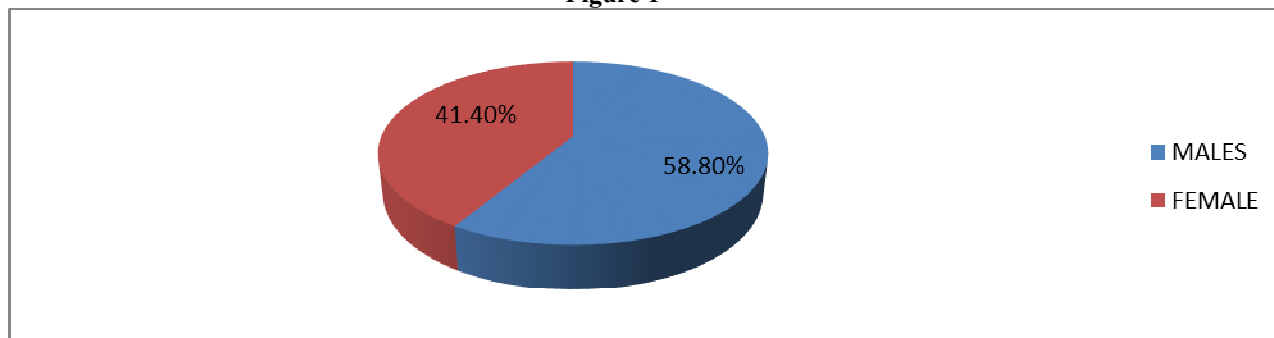
The questionnaire was used as the instrument for data collection. The questions comprised entirely closed ended questions.

Analysis of data

The researcher's method of data analysis was quantitative. Answers extracted via the questionnaire were recorded as numeral data; the frequency of each answer was found and computed accordingly. The research questions and hypothesis were answered using the Pearson Chi-square goodness of fit test.

Demographic Variable

Distribution of Respondents Sex
Figure 1



The data analysed in the demographic section showed that 58.8% (235) of the respondents are males, while 31.3% (165) are females. The data here indicates that the distribution of the male respondents is a little higher than that of their female counterpart.

Distribution of Respondents Academic Qualification

Figure 2

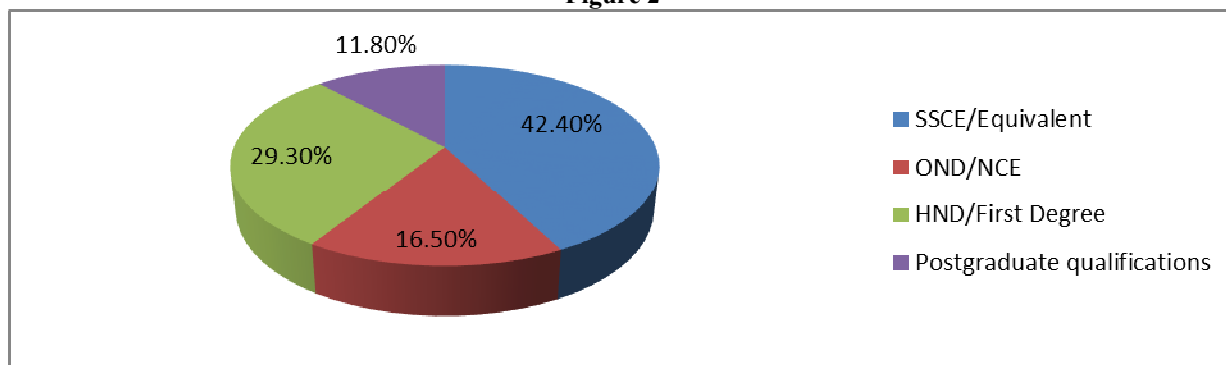


Figure 2 shows the distribution of the respondent's academic qualification. From the data generated, 53.3% of the respondents were OND certificate holders, higher percentage, 24.8. % had either Degree or Diploma certificates, while 24.8% of them were Post Graduate Diploma Degree holders. From the above, it was clear that the OND Degree holders ranked highest followed by First Degree and Diploma holders and Post Graduate Degree holders.

Age Distribution of the Respondents

Figure 3

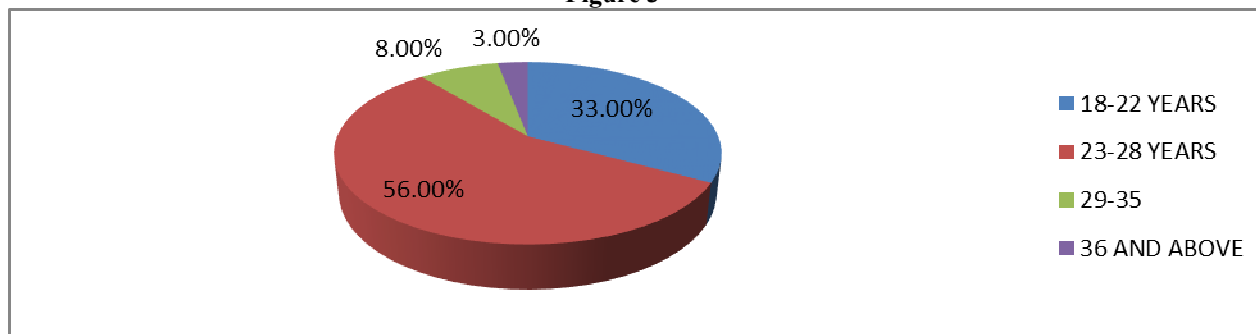


Figure 3 analyzed the age distribution of the respondents, from the analysis, respondents that fell within the ages of 18-22 accounted for 33.3%, those that were between 23-28 years had 56 % of the distribution, those of them that fell within the 29-35 age range were only 8.%, while those that were ranked 35 and above had 3%. It is clear from the above data that age 23-28 years ranked highest in the distribution, followed by those respondents who are 18-22 years and the ones who are 29-35 years. The least were the respondents who are 36 years and above.

Research Question one: To What Extent Do Facebook Users in Anambra State Rely on It for Political Messages?

Table 1

| Access To Facebook | Response | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|-----------------|------------------|-------------------|
| | Yes | 230 | .57.5% |
| | No | 170 | 42.5% |
| | Total | 400 | 100% |
| Ability To use the Facebook | | | |
| | Yes | 236 | 60% |
| | No | 165 | 40% |
| | Total | 400 | 100% |
| Respondents Access to Facebook Political Messages | | | |
| | Yes | 317 | 79.3% |
| | No | 83 | 20.8% |
| | Total | 400 | 100% |
| Regularity of Access to Political Messages on Facebook | | | |
| | Always | 206 | 46.5% |
| | Not Always | 98 | 24.6% |
| | Never | - | |
| | Don't know | 96 | 24% |
| | Total | 400 | 100% |
| Reliance of Facebook users on Political messages | | | |
| | Yes | 295 | 73.8% |
| | No | 105 | 26.2% |
| | Total | 400 | 100% |

Table one above shows that greater percentage, 57.5% (230) of the respondents indicated that they have access to the Facebook, while 42.5 (170) said that they don't have access to Facebook. Furthermore, 60% of the respondents (236) said that they have the ability to operate the Facebook platform, while 40 (165) said they don't. Again, greater percentage, 79.3% of them indicated that they have access to political messages on the Facebook, while only 20.8% of them (83) said they don't. For the data collected on the regularity of accessing political messages on Facebook, 46.5% (206) of the respondents indicated that they access the Facebook always, 24.6% (85) said not always, while 23% of them said that they don't know. Based on the data gathered here the answer to our research question is that Facebook users in Anambra State significantly rely on it for political messages.

Research Question Two: How do the Users Perceive Political Messages On Facebook?

Table 2

| Perception of Facebook Political Messages As Credible | Respon | Frequenc | Percentag |
|--|--------|-------------|-------------|
| | No | 364 | 87.0% |
| | Yes | 54 | 13% |
| | Total | 400 | 100% |
| They are propaganda messages | | | |
| | Yes | 267 | 66.8% |
| | No | 133 | 33.2% |
| | Total | 400 | 100% |
| Are Political Messages on Facebook A Reflection of Parties promises Manifestoes etc | | | |
| | Yes | 158 | 37% |
| | No | 242 | 63% |
| | Total | 400 | 100% |
| Were you persuaded by one of such political messages on Facebook to either vote or form your opinion about the government? | | | |
| | Yes | 178 | 44.5% |
| | No | 222 | 55.5% |
| | Total | N400 | 100% |

From the data in table two above, 87 % (364) indicated that Facebook political messages are perceived as non-credible, while 13% (54) indicated that they are perceived as credible. Again, 66.8% (267) of the respondents noted that Facebook political messages are propaganda messages of the political parties or government, while only 33.2% (133) said they are not. Similarly, 37% (158) of them said they believed the Facebook political messages were a reflection of either the party's or the government's reflection of their manifestoes, promises, while 63% (242) said no. Furthermore, 44.5% (178) of the respondents indicated that they were influenced by such messages either to vote for a political party, or form an opinion, while only 55.5% (222) said that they were not.

Research Question Three: To What Extent Do They Believe Facebook Political Messages?

Table 3

| | | | |
|--|-------|-----|-------|
| Do you believe that these Political messages from the Facebook are truthful? | | | |
| | Yes | 154 | 38.5% |
| | No | 246 | 61.5% |
| | Total | 400 | 100 |
| Do you believe such political messages are consistent | | | |
| | Yes | 179 | 44.8% |
| | No | 221 | 55.2% |
| | Total | 400 | 100% |
| Believe political messages from Facebook are half truths. | | | |
| | Yes | 235 | 58.7% |
| | No | 161 | 41.3% |
| | Total | 400 | 100 |
| Believe in political messages from Facebook | | | |
| | Yes | 99 | 24.8% |
| | No | 301 | 75.2% |
| | Total | 400 | 100% |

Table 3 shows that 38.5% of the respondents believe that political messages from the Facebook are truthful, while 61.5% don't. Furthermore, 44.8% of the respondents believe that such political messages are consistent, while 55.2% don't. In addition, 58.7% of them believe the messages are half truths, while 41.3% don't. Similarly, 24.8 of the respondents believe in Facebook political messages, while 75.3% of them don't. Against the foregoing, the answer to the research question is that Facebook users in Anambra State do not believe these

political messages.

Research Question Four: What use do they make of Political Messages on Facebook ?

Table 4

| | | | |
|--|---------------------|----|-------|
| Did you get political messages through e Facebook? | | | |
| | Yes | 24 | 62.3% |
| | No | 15 | 37.7% |
| | Total | 40 | 100% |
| Did the political messages inform you about Political candidates and their manifestoes | | | |
| | Yes | 28 | 67% |
| | No | 13 | 33% |
| | Total | 40 | 100% |
| What is the major purpose these messages serve you? | | | |
| | Information | 20 | 50% |
| | Political education | 50 | 25% |
| | Entertainment | 30 | 15% |
| | Others | 20 | 10% |
| | | 40 | |

Table 4 shows that 62.3% of the respondents said that they get political messages from the Facebook, while 37.7% said they don't. Furthermore, 67% of them said they get informed about political candidates, party's manifestoes and others from the political messages on Facebook while only 33% said no. Based on these observations, the answer to research question 4 is that Facebook users in Anambra State principally get information from Facebook political messages. Again, 50% of the respondents said that their major purpose for political messages is for information, 25% of them said they use it mainly for political education, 15% said it is for entertainment, while only 10% of them said they use for others activities.

Testing the Hypotheses

It is important to note that the first hypothesis was tested using the Chi-square goodness of fit test, while the second hypothesis was tested with the Spearman's Correlations Coefficient.

H₁ There will be significant relationship between users' believability and the use they make of Facebook political messages

H₀ There will be no significant relationship between users' believability and the use they make of Facebook political messages.

Table 1 Chi square Result on Hypothesis

| Response | O | E | (O-E) | (O-E) ² | (O-E) ² /E | X ² -Cal | X ² -Crit | Decision |
|----------|-----|-----|-------|--------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|----------------------|------------|
| Yes | 99 | 400 | -24.8 | 356.25 | 1.65 | | | Hypothesis |
| No | 301 | 400 | 75.3 | 356.25 | 1.65 | 3.30 | 3.84 | Rejected |

Note

The result in the table shows that the calculated value of X² which is 3.30 (i.e. 1.65 + 1.65) is less than the critical value (3.84) and at 0.05 probability level. The null hypothesis, is therefore, rejected. This therefore, means that there is no significant relationship between users' believability and the use they make of Facebook political messages.

H² There will be relationship between users' level of education and the use they make of Facebook political messages

H⁰ There will be no relationship between users' level of education and the use they make of Facebook political messages

Table II

Correlations

| | | LEVEL OF EDUCATION | USE OF FACEBOOK POLITICAL MESSAGES | |
|----------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------------------|-------|
| Spearman's rho | Level Of Education | Correlation Coefficient | 1.000 | |
| | | Sig. (2-tailed) | .857** | |
| | | N | .000 | |
| | Use Of Facebook Messages | Correlation Coefficient | .857** | 1.000 |
| | | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 | . |
| | | N | 3 | 3 |

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

The analysis above shows that the p-value (0.000) is less than the alpha value (0.01) with a correlation coefficient of 0.857, the researcher therefore accepted the alternative hypothesis that there is a significant relationship between users' level of education and the use they make of Facebook political messages. This somewhat presupposes that with the increase in ones' level of education, his/her usability of Facebook political messages will also increase. In other words, this implies that the two variables positively correlated with each other

Discussion Findings

Findings of the study reveal first that Facebook users in Anambra State rely on it for political messages. This observation is in congruence with Obaze (2015, p.2). He argues:

In the recent past, social media, especially the Facebook had remained a veritable tool for political communication in governance; it has become a platform for passing political messages to not only the electorates during political campaigns and elections, but to the citizens on the government's policies and programmes. The emergence of the social media tool has inspired hope of providing a channel for the revivication of public sphere congenial to the democratic process.

In addition, Obaze (2015) notes "this explains the reason for the presence of almost most Nigerian State Governors on social media" These Governors, Obaze reasons, "probably see the Facebook as a way of reaching and lending their voices to the populace." This finding is also in line with Mabogunje, (2011); Dwividi, (2014); Omede & Alebius, (2015, p.12) who are of the view that "the arrival of the social media redefined the way things were done in politics evidently changing the landscape and the way people participated in politics" Olley and Ekerator (2013, p. 88) also agree with the above views when they reason that "The social media have become the engine of social movement in the world, through it, citizens are being mobilized " Nwodu & Agbanu (2015, p.295) position also agree with the finding. They argue, "The social media have become a major election information sharing platform globally because of its use, reach, speed and revolutionalising the efficacy of election administration, coverage and reporting"

The study also found out that Facebook users in Anambra state do not perceive political messages on it as credible, and/or reflection of what politicians say, but as propaganda statements. This position is in tandem with the views of Metzger, (2011). Commenting on the believability of political messages on the Facebook, Kaye (2010) notes that "most users of social media network use them for entertainment rather than in-depth political information, further users are likely to believe and support opinion if they are only advocated by those with similar political interest and or people who they already know and trust " considered from the above point of view, one might extrapolate that the explanation for the respondents distrust of the political messages might somewhat be connected to the failure of the past governments to deliver their promises to the electorates that voted them to power. It's important to note that some of these promises were largely made through such social media platforms, like Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, 2go, YouTube etc, and because these promises which the populace look forward to changing their lives are not fulfilled, the users of Facebook eventually are the "disappointed populace" that tend to lose confidence in the political messages of politicians.

The third research finding showed that the users of Facebook messages in Anambra State do not perceive political messages as true. They do not believe it.

And the fourth research finding demonstrated that users of Facebook in Anambra State particularly use the platform for gathering political information. This view is supported by Okeke Faith & Obi (2016); Karpf, (2008); Kutshin & Kitchener (2009). Also in line with the above finding is Nwodu (2007), as cited in Nwabueze &

Nnabuenyi (2012). They note:

Social media technologies could be used to make impact in political environments. This platform has helped to provide sufficient and illuminating political information, become a guiding target for voting decisions by shaping opinion and shaping political agenda, it has educated the electorates about election procedures and created awareness about a candidate and his campaign messages vis-à-vis the overall unfolding issues and processes.

The fact that social media remains a veritable tool for gathering political information is not contestable (Okeke Faith & Obi, 2016). Also in congruence with the above finding is Udeze, Nwodu & Nwodu (2015) "That no communication technology mode has made the global citizen active participant in the business of encoding and decoding of global information more than the social media" These information include the political information needed for the growth and orderliness of the society.

Conclusion

There is no doubt that the social media as channel for communication has come to stay. Interestingly, unlike the traditional media channels, the social media appears to have a higher degree of freedom, providing a platform where the user sometimes, generates his/her contents. This revolution apparently places the social media especially, Facebook in a position where it becomes a veritable tool for the citizens, to monitor the activities of the government, in order to ensure good governance and accountability, while the same time giving opportunity to the government to reach her citizens this time, in a more interactive manner on their policies, plans and programmes. The problem of believability as indicated by the study to large extent, seems to be related with the problem of source and message credibility (Agba, 2003, p.145) captures it this way: "when what is said on social network sites is not what is meant and finally done, it leaves the users of this platform with so much doubt and uncertainty and consequentially leads to mistrust"

Recommendation

The following recommendations are made based on the findings of the study:

1. The political class while using Facebook for political communication should endeavour to repackage the contents to look more credible like those of the mainstream media. The deliberate use of professionals in this regard is suggested.
2. Facebook users should confirm political messages received from other sources before regarding them as entirely non-credible or propagandistic.
3. The politicians should try and replicate political messages in other social media channels including the mainstream media for cross referencing and for possible change of the perception.

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