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Facebook and Twitter Analytics of Political Parties in Nigeria

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Abstract

The study was to establish the number of political parties in Nigeria that are registered on the social media, ascertain their followership and how active they are on the social media, as well as to document how they use the social media in their communications. The research was limited to Facebook and Twitter. The theory guiding the study was the New Media Theory. Triangulation method was used sequentially where internet research and content analysis research designs were employed. The research populations consisted of the 25 political parties registered by the Independent National Electoral Commission, INEC of Nigeria as at 1st January 2013 and 1st January, 2014, and 118 days of the months of January and February in 2013 and 2014 respectively. Search results conducted on Facebook and Twitter revealed that only a few of Nigerian political parties, 10 (40%) and 3 (12%) had Facebook and Twitter profiles in 2013 and 9 (36%) and 5 (20%) parties were on Facebook and Twitter in 2014 respectively. Their accounts did not have a large following on the social media when the numbers were compared with the population of internet penetration in Nigeria and also with the major political parties in Australia, France, Germany, United States and the UK. Most of the party accounts on Facebook and Twitter were not regularly updated with only 4 of 10 and 2 of 3 on Facebook and Twitter respectively in 2013, and 6 out of 9 on Facebook and 3 out of 5 on Twitter in 2014 active during the study period. All the active political parties on the social media used their accounts to post “news”, while 2014 saw an increase in the use of pictures in posts/tweets. This research demonstrates that political parties in Nigeria have not fully integrated social media networks in their public communication campaigns. The study recommends that political parties should actively embrace digital communication in their interactions with their publics. The researcher believes that although traditional means of communication will continue to play a prominent role in political campaigns of political parties in Nigeria, social media will play an ever increasing role in campaigns.

Introduction:

1.1 Background to the study: In Nigeria, political discourse on the social media networks has also witnessed an increase in recent times especially on Facebook and Twitter. President Goodluck Jonathan's Special Adviser (Media and Publicity), Dr. Reuben Abati wrote an article in the Guardian newspaper of August 2012, where he described critics of the government in the social media as "...collective children of anger, distracted crowd of Facebook addicts who seem to be in competition among themselves to pull down the President". This confirms that Nigeria has a very vibrant social media user audience whose views have not gone unnoticed by the Federal Government.

Already, most of the traditional media outlets (newspapers, radio and television) ranging from NTA, AIT and Raypower FM, Rhythm FM, Channels Television to Thisday newspapers, The Nation newspaper, The Punch newspaper and many more already have official Facebook pages and/or Twitter profiles with thousands of followers on both networks. News stories about political parties in Nigeria are reported almost on a daily basis on the social media by these mainstream media houses but what has not been very visible are political parties using social media to reach out directly to social media users.

According to Forbes (2012), twitter records about three millions tweets per day with over 500 million users; and Facebook's official company statistics outlines that there are more than one billion active users all over the world and their number continues to grow daily (Facebook, 2012). Research by socialbakers.com (2013) estimates that Nigeria has about 5.3 million Facebook users and ranked 35 among countries of the world in Facebook usage. Taking into consideration the above facts, we can say that the information revolution (Internet, mobile and social media) is significantly changing traditional publicity and public relations campaigns, which can be adjusted to these new technologies.

Estimates from the internet usage statistics according to Internet World Stats put Nigeria's internet population at about 48.36 million people, with a percentage population penetration of 28.4% and accounting for 28.9% of total internet users in Africa (Internet World Stats, 2012). This makes Nigeria the country with the most internet users in Africa. This was a long leap from the less than a 100 thousand Internet users recorded in Nigeria as at 1999 before the handover of power from the military to the civilians (Ogunlesi, 2011). The International Telecommunications Union further predicts that the number will increase to about 70 million people by 2015 (International Telecommunication Union, 2011).

Social media use has been documented in politics in Nigeria in the lead up to the presidential election of 2011. Worthy of note was the action of President Goodluck Jonathan on Wednesday 15th September, 2010, when he declared his interest to contest the presidential election in 2011. This announcement was strategic in the sense that it was on the same day former President Ibrahim Babangida also declared his intention to contest the same election (Ogunlesi, 2011).

Generally, the research field on social media in the political context is still young in Nigeria unlike countries like United States, Germany or Australia. Little is known about the relevance of social media for politics in the national discourse or the factors of success for the application of social media for political purposes during election campaigns.

Statement of the problem: This research is descriptive in nature and seeks to examine social media use by political parties in Nigeria. Social media have shown strong development since they first

Facebook and Twitter Analytics of Political ... Ndinojuo, Walter C. Ihejirika, Sunny Mbazie & Eludu, Stella appeared alongside the commercial Internet in 1995. Currently, there are more than 200 different social networking sites and this number is growing daily (Kichatov & Mihajlovski, 2010).

Social media is one of the new technologies used by political parties in their public communication. With the large number of social networking sites, there is relatively no data for researchers and others to work with on the number of political parties in Nigeria registered on these social media networks and also how these social media applications are used by parties in Nigeria. This is important because the role of social media in today's world and in political communication cannot be underestimated.

Against this handicap, this study is therefore set to establish the number of political parties in Nigeria who are registered on the social media, ascertain their followership and how active they are on the social media, as well as to document how they use the social media in their communications and also monitor and document their progress over a two year period (2013 and 2014).

Objectives of the study:

The objectives of this study include:

1. To determine the political parties in Nigeria registered on the social media.
2. To find out the magnitude of followership of each of the political parties in Nigeria on the social media.
3. To ascertain how active each of the political parties are on the social media.
4. To find out the types of message posted/tweeted by political parties in Nigeria on the social media with a view to identify the intentions, focus or communication trends among the political parties.
5. Compare social media use by political parties in Nigeria in 2013 and 2014.

1.4 Research questions:

The following research questions have been formulated to guide this study:

RQ 1: How many political parties in Nigeria are registered on the social media?

RQ 2: What types of message do political parties in Nigeria post/tweet on the social media?

RQ 3: What are the differences in social media use by political parties in Nigeria between 2013 and 2014?

Literature Review: McLuhan (1964) offers an interesting perspective on the difference between old and new media, basically by saying that there is no static border between the two. He coins the phrase "the medium is the message", where he argues that new mediums feed from older media. Thus, the new medium of words consumed the older medium of sounds, and in a more modern context the newer medium of film consumed the older medium of the novel. In this context then, 'new media' consist of older media and therefore the two can be separated by time, and the newer media can be termed as 'new media'.

Today, this consumption is more intense than ever before and there is nothing indicating that it will slow down. With the digitization of all kinds of information such as speech, text, image and film, and the possibility of connecting everyone to everyone on the Internet, has made McLuhan's theories increasingly relevant (Lifvergren, 2011).

The new electronic media, according to Mcquail (2010), have been hailed as potential ways of escape from the oppressive "top-down" politics of mass democracies in which tightly organized political parties make policy unilaterally and mobilize support behind them with minimal

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negotiation and grass-roots input. They provide the means for highly differentiated provision of political information and ideas, almost unlimited access in theory for all voices, and much feedback and negotiation between leaders and followers.

“The most widely noted potential consequence for the media institution is the convergence between all existing media forms in terms of their organization, distribution, reception and regulation” (p.138).

The Internet to some extent is the medium of all mediums in the sense that it incorporates all previous media. In McLuhan’s terms, it is consuming generously from older media such as the newspaper, radio, television etc (Lifvergren, 2011). Jenkins (2006) argues that this media convergence leads to a cultural shift, and that it is a constant force for unification that evolves through change. In other words, media convergence is a convergence of how we use media which in turn changes how media is produced and consumed.

Social media as the new media of today creates a digital library, allowing individuals to have access to all content from various mass media outlets on the internet. Therefore, a Facebook user who ‘likes’ the official pages of news outlets like BBC, CNN, AIT, Supersports etc. or a Twitter user who follows the news sources will receive the latest news updates on his timeline once he logs in, thus saving him the time of browsing their individual websites for news stories, he can then click the stories he considers most relevant for further information.

According to Garcia (2010), interactive social media platforms (Facebook, LinkedIn, Del.ici.ous, Twitter, Youtube, Foursquare, Digg in...) have radically changed the communication paradigm. Garcia (2010) informs that a study by Chadwick Martin Bailey and iModerate Research Technologies in February 2010, found that consumers are 67% more likely to buy from the brands they follow on Twitter, and 51% more likely to buy from a brand they follow on Facebook, showing clearly, that the audience is highly influenced by the social media phenomena.

Research Methodology: This section deals with the methodology of the study. It outlines the research design, the population of the study, the sampling procedure, instruments used for data collection, the method that was used to collect the data and the method that was used to analyse the data.

- (i) **Research design:** This study made use of sequential triangulation involving internet research and content analysis research designs. Clark (2005) informs that the reason for sequential triangulation is developmental where the first method was used to inform the second method. Thus the internet research of political parties registered political parties by INEC in Nigeria that use Facebook and Twitter in their public communication is used to form content for the second method (content analysis).

The study was conducted in two years and in two phases; the first phase (internet research) was to identify the political parties in Nigeria with Facebook and Twitter accounts, and the second phase involves analyzing the posts and tweets on the social media using content analysis.

- (ii) **Research populations:** To determine the relevant population is to specify the boundaries of the body of content to be considered, which requires an appropriate operational definition of the relevant population (Oracle, 2011). The research populations of this study were; the political parties registered in Nigeria by INEC, as at 1st January, 2013 and 1st January 2014; and the Facebook and Twitter posts and/or tweets of the selected political parties from 1st January, 2013 to 28th February 2013 and January 1 2014 to February 28, 2014, which amounted to a duration of 118 days.

(iii) Population size and sampling technique: The study selected all the registered political parties by INEC in Nigeria as at January 1, 2013 and January 1, 2014. There were 25 parties each in 2013 and 2014 respectively. The content analysed on Facebook and Twitter was from “January 1 2013 to February 28, 2013” and “January 1 2014 to February 28 2014”. Data were collected daily at 10pm during the study period from the sampled social media timelines of the political parties.

The simplest form of selecting content for analysis is a *census*– i.e. selection of all units in the sampling frame. This provides the greatest possible representation (Macnamara, 2005). Census was used for this study to ensure equal representation for sampled parties to reduce unintended bias. This study selected all the social media communication of the sampled political parties in Nigeria during the study period (118 days) with each post/tweet treated as a sample for Facebook and Twitter respectively.

The study period was selected because it was not close to or during any national election as such, political parties will not have a motivation to communicate with their publics unlike during elections periods when they have the “need” to campaign and bombard the public with messages soliciting for votes. Thus only serious minded political parties with governance and public opinion in mind will be posting/tweeting on the social media at such a time.

(iv) Units of analysis and content categories: The unit of analysis according to Wimmer and Dominic (2003) “is the smallest element of a content analysis but also one of the most important” (p.148). They further state that at the heart of any content analysis is the category system used to classify media content. Stacks and Hocking (1992) define the unit of analysis as “what you actually count and assign to categories” (p.256). They further add that “choosing the proper category system is critical in conducting a content analysis” (p.258). Categories must be mutually exclusive so that a word, a paragraph or a theme belongs in one and only one category. Also, the categories must be exhaustive so that all units examined fit in an appropriate category (Prasad, 2008).

Table 1: Framework for Content Analysis

Content Categories	Units of Analysis
Information Provision	News
	Press Releases
	Policy Statements
Interactivity Chats	Interactive Chat
	Q and A Sessions
	Response to Enquiries
Multimedia	Pictures
	Audio Content
	Video Content
Targeted Audience	Targeting specific voter segments
	Targeting opponents

Revised from Gong & Lips (2009)

(iv) Research instruments: Polit and Hungler (1999) define data as “information obtained in a course of a study” (p.267). The instruments of data collection used for this study were search engines, screenshot captor, for capturing screenshots (pictures) of the profiles of the sampled

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political parties as they appear on Facebook and twitter and a coding schedule with the framework as shown above in table 1 as a guide during the coding process.

Miller, Neil and Salkind (2002) are of the view that search engines allow researchers to enter search terms; the engine then lists Web pages on which information about the terms might be found. A search engine uses software known as a Web crawler to follow the hyperlinks connecting the pages on the World Wide Web. The information on these Web pages is indexed and stored by the search engine. To access this information, a user enters keywords in a search form and the search engine queries its indices to find Web pages that contain the keywords and displays them in search engine results page (SERP). The SERP list typically includes hyperlinks and brief descriptions of the content found. Multiple search engines were used to maximize results. Search engines used include Google, Facebook and Twitter.

The pictures were collected using a screen grabber software (Screenshot Captor v2.105.01) already installed on the computer. Screen grabber software enables users to save the work area on their computer screens as pictures on their computer disk drives or on other specified locations like external drives as required by users.

(v) Reliability of the research instruments: According to Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2007), reliability is concerned with whether alternative researchers would reveal similar information. Weber (1990) notes: “to make valid inferences from the text, it is important classification procedure be reliable in the sense of being consistent, different people should code the text in the same way” (p.12). Neuendorf (2002) suggests that when human coders are used in content analysis, reliability translates to intercoder reliability or “the amount of agreement or correspondence among two or more coders”. Gottschalk (1995) points out that the issue of reliability may be further complicated by the inescapably human nature of researchers. For this reason, he suggests that coding errors can only be minimized, and not eliminated with 80% as an acceptable margin for reliability.

Neuendorf (2002) proposed that; coefficients of .90 or greater are nearly always acceptable, .80 or greater is acceptable in most cases, and .70 may be appropriate in some exploratory studies for some indices.

Substituting for the values in the above equation,

$$\text{Coefficient of Reliability} = \frac{1045}{1093} = 0.96$$

The obtained data by independent coders were found to be internally consistent and reliable for this study.

Method of data collection: For this study primary and secondary data were used. Osuala (2005) defines primary data as “any data collected expressly for a specific purpose’ and secondary data as “data collected for some other purpose, frequently for administrative reasons” (p.138). The multiple sources of data for this work include secondary data from INEC website and primary data from the social networking websites; Facebook and Twitter were used to source for data, and were collected using a coding sheet. The information obtained relates to what is currently happening and is not complicated by either the past behaviour or future intentions or attitudes of the sampled population.

The nature of the study made the researcher use the search engine applications of Google, Facebook, and Twitter to extensively search for profiles of the two sets of 25 political parties in Nigeria in order to have access to their social media profiles and ascertain their usage of the social networks. Political parties that had functional websites provide a doorway to access their social

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media profiles on their websites, while for those without websites, search engines were used to find them on the social media. This is supported by Reilly, Richey and Taylor (2012) who are of the view that Google search provides a new and rich data for political scientists.

Method of data analyses: Saunders et al. (2007) are of the opinion that, there are three stages in the data analysis process: data reduction, data display, drawing and verifying conclusions. The aim of data reduction is to condense and transform data into more usable material. In order to do this, the data is summarized and simplified by focusing on the most important parts. The data display stage is used to organize and assemble reduced data into visual form, such as tables and/or figures, in order to make the data easier to handle. The outcome of those two stages of analysis is drawn and verified in the conclusion.

According to Saunders et al. (2007), there are qualitative and quantitative approaches available for researchers. A qualitative approach is based on interpretation of non-numerical data such as words, while quantitative is based on numerical data. This study used both qualitative and quantitative approaches in analyzing the research data. The data gathered were analyzed quantitatively using tables, simple percentage (%), bar charts and pie charts, and qualitatively, were reduced in order to pinpoint the most important data relevant to the study and analyzed descriptively to ensure comprehension.

Data Presentation and Analysis:

Data presentation: Data collected from the study are presented below.

Research Question 1: How many political parties in Nigeria are registered on the social media?

The results for the number of political parties in Nigeria with profiles on Facebook and/or Twitter in 2013 shows that out of the 25 registered political parties in Nigeria, 10 have Facebook pages and 3 have Twitter accounts respectively. The parties include; Accord, Action Congress of Nigeria, All Nigeria Peoples Party, All Progressive Grand Alliance, Congress for Progressive Change, Kowa Party, Labour Party, Peoples Democratic Party, People for Democratic Change and United Progressive Party all have Facebook profiles, while Action Congress of Nigeria, Kowa Party and Peoples Democratic Party had Twitter accounts..

In 2014, 25 political parties were also registered by INEC, although Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN), All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP) and Congress for Progressive Change (CPC) merged to become All Progressive Congress (APC). Social Democratic Mega Party (SDMP) was deregistered in 2013 while Independent Democrats (ID), Peoples Democratic Movement (PDM) and Social Democratic Party (SDP) were registered by INEC as new political parties.

The 2014 result showed that 9 political parties have Facebook pages while 5 had Twitter accounts. The 9 include; Accord, Alliance for Democracy, All Progressive Congress. All Progressive Grand Alliance, Kowa Party, Labour Party, Peoples Democratic Party, Social Democratic Party and United Progressive Party, and the 5 with Twitter accounts are All Progressive Congress, Kowa Party, Labour Party, Peoples Democratic Party and United Progressive Party.

41.1 Party information:

- I. Accord (A)**– is a political party in Nigeria that was registered by INEC in 2006 (Epia, 2006), and joined Facebook on November 2, 2012. A brief introduction of the party, its logo and slogan "Oneness and progress" are written on their profile.

- II. Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN)**– was founded in 2006 as a classical liberal Nigerian political party (Our Party, 2012). They have both Facebook and Twitter profiles, with party logo visible on both profiles. They joined Facebook on November 8, 2010 and Twitter on November 10, 2010. Their slogan “Justice, Peace and Prosperity” as well as their mission statement were also written on their profile.
- III. Alliance for Democracy (AD)**– is a progressive opposition political party in Nigeria. It was formed on September 9, 1998. At the 2003 legislative elections, 12 April 2003, the party won 8.8% of the popular vote and 34 out of 360 seats in the Nigerian House of Representatives and six out of 109 seats in the Nigerian Senate. The party was embroiled in a leadership tussle between Mojisola Akinfenwa and Adebisi Akande , which lingered until September 2006 when the 'Bisi Akande faction merged with other opposition parties to form the Action Congress (Wikipedia, 2014). They joined Facebook on the 18th February, 2014.
- IV. All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP)**– was founded in 1998 (Aluko, 2003). They joined Facebook on October 16, 2010. Their profile contains their logo, mission statement, brief history and a claim where they described the party as the leading opposition party in Nigeria.
- V. All Progressive Congress (APC)**- Formed in February 2013, the party is the result of an alliance by three opposition parties- the Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN), the Congress for Progressive Change (CPC), the All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP), and a faction of the All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA).
- The party was registered by Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) on July 31, 2013 to become a political party and subsequently withdrew the operating licenses of the three previous and merging parties (APC News, 2013). They joined Facebook on the 13th August, 2013 and Twitter on the 10th September, 2013.
- VI. All Progressive Grand Alliance (APGA)**– is a progressive political party in Nigeria that was registered by INEC on June 23, 2002 (Aluko, 2003). They joined Facebook on February 19, 2011. Their logo is visible as profile picture but there’s no introductory message or slogan.
- VII. Congress for Progressive Change (CPC)**– is a political party founded in 2009 in preparation for the April 2011 elections (Omokhunu, 2011). It supports individual liberty, rights and social welfare for the less privileged. It joined Facebook on February 15, 2011.
- VIII. Kowa Party (KP)**– was registered as a political party on July 16, 2009 (Lawanti, 2009). They have both Facebook and Twitter accounts. They joined Facebook on July 14, 2010 and Twitter on June 16, 2010. Their party building was used as profile picture also showing their logo. The profile also contained their mission statement and a brief history of the party.
- IX. Labour Party (LP)**– is a social democratic political party in Nigeria registered by INEC as Party for Social Democracy (PSD) in 2002, but changed its name to Labour Party after the 2003 general elections (Ogunde, 2007). They joined Facebook on October 10, 2010. The party logo and slogan “Equal Opportunity and Social Justice” are written on their profile and Twitter in 2013.
- X. Peoples Democratic Party (PDP)**– is the ruling party in Nigeria and has won every presidential election in Nigeria since 1999. It was founded in 1998 (Aluko, 2003) with policies lying towards the right wing of the political spectrum. They are the third party with both Facebook and Twitter profiles, both were created on April 2, 2012. Their profile displays

the party logo and picture of President Goodluck Jonathan who was elected under the party platform at an event.

XI. People for Democratic Change (PDC)– was registered as a political party in Nigeria on July 16, 2009 (Lawanti, 2009). They joined Facebook on November 17, 2010. Their profile picture is 2011 presidential campaign poster with no party logo. The profile has an introduction calling on people who want change to join them.

XII. Social Democratic Party (SDP)– This was the platform under which Chief MKO Abiola contested the 1993 presidential elections in Nigeria. It was resurrected by Chief Olu Falae in 2013 and was registered by INEC as a political party on 24th April, 2013 (Badejo, 2013). SDP joined Facebook on 11th December, 2011.

XIII. United Progressive Party (UPP)– was registered on October 4, 2012 as a political party in Nigeria (Okorie, 2012). They joined Facebook on November 26, 2012. The Tiger, which is the logo of the party, is set as the profile picture. There is no further information about them on their profile.

In 2014, 335 posts were recorded on Facebook with 6 out of the 9 political parties on Facebook being active, while 671 tweets were recorded on Twitter with 2 out of the 5 parties being active on twitter during the study period. The summation was presented in table 4.4 below.

Research Question 4: What type of messages do political parties in Nigeria post/tweet on the social media?

We shall analyse how political parties made use of their social media profiles by finding out the type of messages posted and /or tweeted by the political parties classifying them into any of the content categories and units of analysis that they fall into during the study periods in 2013 and 2014.

Table 4.5: Summary of Social Media Use for Political Parties in Nigeria 2013

Sl.No.	Political party	Content Categories										
		Information Provision			Interactivity Chats			Multimedia			Targeted Campaigning	
		IP1	IP2	IP3	I1	I2	I3	M1	M2	M3	T1	T2
1	A	√						√				
2	ACN											
3	ANPP											
4	APGA	√										
5	CPC											
6	KP	√		√								
7	LP											
8	PDP	√	√	√			√	√				√
9	PDC											
10	UPP											

Key

IP1 = News

IP2= Press Release

I1= Interactive Chat

I2= Question & Answer Sessions

P1=Pictures

P2= Audio

Content

IP3= Policy Statement

I3= Response to Enquiries

P3=Video Content

T1= Targeting Specific Voter Segments

T2=Targeting Opponents

Table 4.5 above shows a summary of the overall social media activities of political parties in Nigeria. Accord party made use of two units of analysis (news and picture), APGA used only news, Kowa party used news and policy statement, and PDP used news, press release, policy statement, response to enquiries, pictures, and targeting opponents. Further breakdown of their usage according to Facebook and Twitter are presented in tables 4.7 and 4.8.

Table 4.6: Summary of Social Media Usage by Political Parties in Nigeria 2014

Sl. No.	Political party	Content Categories										
		Information Provision			Interactivity Chats			Multimedia			Targeted Campaigning	
		IP1	IP2	IP3	I1	I2	I3	M1	M2	M3	T1	T2
1	A											
2	AD	√										
3	APC	√						√				
4	APGA	√						√				
5	KP	√										
6	LP	√										√
7	PDP	√						√				√
8	SDP											
9	UPP											

Table 4.6 shows a summary of the overall social media activities of political parties in Nigeria. AD, KP and LP made use of one unit of analysis (news), APC and APGA used news and pictures, and PDP used news, pictures, and targeting opponents. Further breakdown according to Facebook and Twitter are presented in tables 4.9 and 4.10.

Table 4.7: Breakdown of Facebook Posts of Political Parties 2013

Sl.No.	Political party	Content Categories										
		Information Provision			Interactivity Chats			Multimedia			Targeted Campaigning	
		IP1	IP2	IP3	I1	I2	I3	M1	M2	M3	T1	T2
1	A	3						8				
2	APGA	9										
3	KP	3										
4	PDP	17	15					2				1

Table 4.7 above breaks down Facebook posts in 2013 for parties involved. It shows that Accord party used Facebook under news (3 posts) and pictures (8), APGA used it only for news (9), Kowa

Facebook and Twitter Analytics of Political ... Ndinojuo, Walter C. Ihejirika, Sunny Mbazie & Eludu, Stella party used it for news (3) and policy statement (8), and PDP used it for news (17), press release (15), pictures (2) and targeting opponents (1).

Table 4.8: Breakdown of Tweets of Political Parties 2013

Sl. No.	Political party	Content Categories										
		Party Information			Interactivity Chats			Multimedia			Targeted Campaigning	
		IP1	IP2	IP3	I1	I2	I3	M1	M2	M3	T1	T2
1	KP	3		7								
2	PDP	8		2			1	1				

Table 4.8 above shows that Kowa party used Twitter under news (3) and policy statement (7) while PDP recorded news (8), policy statement (2), response to enquiries (1) and pictures (1) during the study period.

Table 4.9: Breakdown of Facebook Posts of Political Parties 2014

Sl. No.	Political party	Content Categories										
		Information Provision			Interactivity Chats			Multimedia			Targeted Campaigning	
		IP1	IP2	IP3	I1	I2	I3	M1	M2	M3	T1	T2
1	AD	4										
2	APC	10						5				
3	APGA	9						2				
4	KP	162										
5	LP	2										
6	PDP	39						91				11

Table 4.10 below is a breakdown of tweets on Twitter by the sampled parties. It shows that KP used Twitter to under the unit of news (566) while PDP used Twitter under the units of news (51), pictures (16) and targeting opponents (8) during the study duration in 2014.

Table 4.10: Breakdown of Tweets of Political Parties 2014

Sl. No.	Political party	Content Categories										
		Party Information			Interactivity Chats			Multimedia			Targeted Campaigning	
		IP1	IP2	IP3	I1	I2	I3	M1	M2	M3	T1	T2
1	KP	566										
2	PDP	51						16				8
3	LP	16										14

Research Question 5: What are the differences in social media use by political parties in Nigeria between 2013 and 2014?

The result from table 4.11 shows that there were 10 political parties using social media in 2013 compared to 9 in 2014, the same result was obtained for those using Facebook. 3 parties were registered to Twitter in 2013 compared to 5 in 2014. The number of combined Facebook 'likes' for all the parties in 2013 was 21333 while 2014 had 58741 'likes'. Twitter had a combined

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followership of 6853 for the parties in 2013 and 6243 in 2014. 2013 recorded a combined post of 65 on Facebook for the parties while 2014 recorded 335 combined Facebook posts for the parties. The total number of parties active on Facebook in 2013 was 4 while 2014 saw 6 parties being active during the study period. 2013 recorded a total of 22 tweets compared to the 671 in 2014, 2 parties were active on Twitter during the study period in 2013 and 3 parties were active in 2014 during the study period.

Discussion of Findings

Research objective 1: The number of political parties in Nigeria registered on Facebook and Twitter.

The research revealed that political parties in Nigeria have not fully embraced social media. Facebook and Twitter had a usage statistics of 10(40%) and 3(12%) in 2013 and 9(36%) on Facebook and 5(20%) on Twitter in 2014 of all registered political parties in Nigeria respectively. Facebook was also discovered to be the most popular form of social media the political parties use, as all the parties using social media have a Facebook Page, while only 3(30%) of the parties with a Facebook page used Twitter in 2013, although the number increased to 5(55%) in 2014.

Kowa Party (KP) was the first political party in Nigeria to use both Facebook and Twitter in public communication, although they have no elected official in any national elective position (President, State Government, Senate or House of Representatives), while Alliance for Democracy (AD) was the last party to join Facebook (18/03/2014).

The low level of use of social media by political parties in Nigeria shows that a majority of the political parties may not believe in the viability of using these media forms for publicity and connecting with potential voters. Political parties like DPP, PPA and PPN have seats in the National Assembly but yet no representation on any of the social media networks. On the other hand, most of the political parties in Nigeria exist more or less “virtually”, as there is little or no information available about them or a functional website, and it is very difficult to see any of their physical addresses in the 36 states of Nigeria except in Abuja.

Research objective 4: The type of messages political parties in Nigeria post/tweet on the social media.

The type of message dominant on the social media timeline of Nigeria political parties in 2013 was “news”, as seen on the timelines of all the political parties in Nigeria on social media during the study period who all posted/tweeted some form of news. They also posted pictures; Accord Party and PDP being the only parties to post pictures (see table 4.7), while PDP was the only party to post press releases on Facebook and also post/tweet pictures on both Facebook and Twitter. There was one response to an enquiry by PDP on Twitter.

Twitter usage in 2013 by the political parties was not very different from Facebook use by political parties. Other than one response to enquiries by PDP, there was no interactive chat or Q & A session, targeted campaigning, audio and video messages just like on Facebook. It was interesting to note however that unlike on Facebook where PDP messages were titled under “press release” or “press statement”, their tweets had no such heading; in fact, there was no press release on Twitter for PDP.

In 2014, ‘news’ was also dominant with all the active parties posting/tweeting some form of news. AD was the least active on Facebook while Kowa party was the most active both on Facebook and Twitter, Labour party was the least active on Twitter. All the posts/tweets by Kowa party were

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news stories from national dailies unlike PDP and Labour party whose posts/tweets were either information or a response to allegations by the opposition parties. PDP also posted pictures of live events as they are happening or after they finished happening, there was however no press release posted by PDP or any other party in 2014.

On Facebook, all the political parties did not make use of “interactivity” features of interactive chat, Q & A session and response to enquiries. They also did not post any message targeting any specific voter segment; neither did they make use of audio and video messages. The latter justifies the researcher’s decision not to include YouTube (a video and audio based social media) in the study due to low patronage among users of social media in Africa generally and Nigeria in particular where users are more of consumers than producers of social media messages mainly due to bandwidth constraints that come with using videos.

Lowensohn (2012) reports that in the run up to the 2012 US Presidential election, the Obama campaign organized a question and answer session on the social network “Reddit”, where registered users on the network signed in at a particular time and asked the president any question of their choice. Users left more than 13,600 questions. Such forums cut across party lines and always attracts more admirers to the party which translates into votes capable of winning elections for the party come election time.

Research objective 5:

Comparing social media use by political parties in Nigeria in 2013 and 2014?

Data from table 4.11 shows that there were changes in the social media landscape between 2013 and 2014 for political parties in Nigeria. It shows a decrease in the total number of political parties on the social media; 2013 had more parties using Facebook while 2014 had more parties using Twitter. Although 2013 had more parties using Facebook than in 2014, 2014 still recorded more parties being active of Facebook (6) than in 2013 (4). Thus we can say that more parties were active in 2014 than in 2013.

This increased activity brought a corresponding increase in followership in 2014 from the 2013 number on Facebook and a surprisingly decreasing Twitter numbers in 2014 from 2013. The decrease in followership may be attributed to the loss of ACN to the merger that gave rise to APC, and the inactivity of the APC Twitter handle. The number of Facebook posts increased significantly by over 415% in 2014 from 2013 and 2950% on Twitter which supports the increased activity of the political parties.

Note that APC has not been completely quiet on Twitter. There are other Twitter profiles bearing APC with large followings on Twitter, because there was no confirmation from officials of APC about the managers of the profiles, the Twitter account we used for this study was the one found on the official APC website (www.apc.com.ng).

The research results indicates that the social media use by political parties in Nigeria is developing albeit progressively each year. This usage is expected to grow in the lead up to 2015 general elections in Nigeria.

Conclusion: This research has been able to establish that social media applications has not been widely incorporated in the publicity and public relations affairs by most political parties in Nigeria. It showed that only 10 of the 25 registered political parties used social media in 2013 and 9 out of the 25 were using social media in 2014. The percentage result would have been lower considering

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that there were 63 registered political parties by INEC during the 2011 general elections (Ekene, 2012). The reason for the reduction in the total number of registered political parties was the deregistering of some parties by INEC in December 2012 (Nkwocha, Achi & Oche, 2012).

Conclusively, political parties in Nigeria still rely heavily on traditional media (television, radio, newspapers and magazines etc.) for most of their interactions with their party members, the general public and media organizations.

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