

REASSESSING THE ROLE OF MOBILE MEDIA IN POLITICAL MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS IN NIGERIA

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Abstract: The study focused on re-assessing the role of mobile media in political marketing communications in Nigeria. The study adopted the library research methods to ascertain scholarly opinions and assertions on the role of mobile media in political marketing communications in Nigeria. The use of mobile media in political marketing emerged as a powerful tool for political campaigns to reach and engage with voters, communicate key messages, and mobilize support in the digital age. Mobile media, including smart phones, tablets, apps, and social media platforms, offer unique opportunities for political marketers to connect with voters in a personalized and interactive way. The study concluded that the use of mobile media has facilitated direct and targeted communication between political candidates and voters, enabling real-time engagement, personalized messaging, and interactive content that can influence voter perceptions and behavior. Social media platforms have become essential tools for political campaigns to reach a wider audience, share campaign updates, and mobilize support, contributing to the democratization of information and political participation in Nigeria. The study recommended that political actors should adopt a multi-platform approach in political marketing communication, utilizing a combination of social media, messaging apps, mobile websites, and SMS to reach a diverse audience. By diversifying their mobile media strategies, political campaigns can maximize their outreach, engage with different demographic groups, and ensure a comprehensive communication strategy that resonates with voters.

Keywords: Re-assessing; Mobile media; Mobile; Media; Political; Marketing communications; Nigeria

1 INTRODUCTION

The interaction between digital technology and politics in Nigeria is evident in using digital tools for political participation, engagement, and mobilization. Technology has revolutionized almost all the activities of humans [1]. Ajayi and Adesote advance that adopting digital tools for political engagement in Nigeria results from three factors[2]: participation, interactivity and cost-effectiveness. These tools, especially the internet and social media, are relatively cheap to access, allow for constant feedback, and the barrier of entry is relatively low. The authors go on to say that these tools are now a crucial component of democratic consolidation since they solidify democratic principles and procedures in terms of information sharing, election monitoring, and evaluation, ultimately promoting accountability and openness.

Digital technology has also created a culture of online activism in Nigeria. Nigerian civic activists have begun aggressively utilizing the Internet, especially social media sites like Facebook, to advance various issues, from environmental awareness to the defense of human rights. Many young Nigerians have adopted online participation and activism as an entry into a more profound political engagement [3]. With a phone and access to the internet, one can share one's views with hundreds or even thousands of people or mobilize likeminded people for a particular cause in a way that cannot be done with the traditional media. Digital technology, including the internet and other mobile devices and platforms, connects people solely for social activities and political activities ranging from elections and mass mobilization to protests, demonstrations, views certain political actors placed or marketed on social media channels.

However, mobile media refers to digital content and communication services that are accessed and consumed through mobile devices such as smartphones and tablets. They encompass a wide range of platforms and technologies, including mobile apps, mobile websites, social media, messaging apps, and mobile advertising. Mobile media have become increasingly prevalent in our daily lives, transforming how we access information, interact with others, and engage with content on the go.

One key aspect of mobile media is their ubiquity and convenience. With the widespread adoption of smart phones and mobile internet connectivity, people can access a wealth of information and services anytime, anywhere. This has led to a shift in media consumption patterns, with more individuals turning to mobile devices as their primary source of news, entertainment, and social interaction [4]. Mobile media also offer a high level of personalization and interactivity, allowing users to customize their content consumption experience and engage with brands and services real-time. Features such as push notifications, location-based services, and in-app messaging enable businesses to deliver targeted and relevant messages to users based on their preferences, behavior, and geographic location [5].

Furthermore, mobile media have revolutionized marketing and advertising practices, offering businesses new opportunities to reach and engage with consumers through targeted campaigns, rich media content, and interactive experiences. Mobile

advertising, in particular, has seen significant growth in recent years, with brands leveraging mobile platforms to deliver ads that are highly targeted, visually engaging, and trackable in terms of user interactions and conversions [6].

The use of mobile media in political marketing has emerged as a powerful tool for political campaigns to reach and engage with voters, communicate key messages, and mobilize support in the digital age. Mobile media, including smartphones, tablets, apps, and social media platforms, offer unique opportunities for political marketers to connect with voters in a personalized and interactive way.

One of the key advantages of using mobile media in political marketing is the ability to reach a large and diverse audience quickly and efficiently. With the widespread adoption of smartphones and the increasing reliance on mobile devices for news and information, political campaigns can leverage mobile apps, social media platforms, and SMS text messaging to disseminate political messages in real-time. This allows campaigns to connect with constituents on a more personal level, engage in two-way communication, and deliver targeted messages tailored to individual preferences and interests [7].

Moreover, mobile media enable political campaigns to harness data analytics and micro-targeting strategies to reach specific demographic groups and geographic locations with precision. By collecting and analyzing user data, campaigns can customize messages, segment audiences, and deliver personalized content that resonates with voters. This level of personalization can enhance the effectiveness of political marketing efforts, increase voter engagement, and drive turnout on election day [8].

Political marketing is a strategic communication process that involves the creation and dissemination of political messages to influence public opinion, mobilize support, and shape electoral outcomes. It is a fundamental component of modern political campaigns, where candidates, parties, and interest groups utilize various tactics and channels to communicate their policy positions, engage with voters, and differentiate themselves from their competitors [9].

The practice of political marketing has evolved significantly over the past few decades, driven by advancements in technology, changes in media consumption patterns, and the growing importance of branding and image management in politics. Political campaigns have increasingly adopted marketing techniques borrowed from the commercial sector, including market research, segmentation, targeting, and message testing, to craft persuasive narratives that resonate with diverse audiences and drive voter behavior [10].

One of the key functions of political marketing is to shape voter perceptions and build support for political candidates and parties. By strategically framing issues, cultivating a favourable image, and engaging with constituents through various media channels, campaigns seek to establish a relationship of trust and credibility with the electorate. However, the use of persuasive messaging techniques, such as emotional appeals, fear tactics, and negative campaigning, has raised concerns about the potential manipulation of public opinion and the erosion of trust in political institutions [11].

Relatively, the mobile media have emerged as a critical tool in political marketing communications in Nigeria, offering political actor's unique opportunities to connect with voters, disseminate messages, and mobilize support in the country's dynamic digital landscape. Mobile media play a significant role in political marketing communication in Nigeria by enabling political campaigns to reach a wide audience across the country quickly and efficiently. With the high penetration of mobile phones and the increasing use of social media platforms, political actors can leverage mobile apps, SMS text messaging, and social media campaigns to engage with voters, share information about policy positions, and mobilize supporters in real-time. This direct and interactive communication channel allows campaigns to foster direct engagement with voters, solicit feedback, and build relationships with constituents [12].

The impact of mobile media in political marketing communication in Nigeria is evident in its ability to enhance voter engagement and mobilization. Political campaigns can leverage data analytics and micro-targeting strategies to reach specific demographic groups and geographic locations with personalized messages. By tailoring campaign content to resonate with the interests and preferences of voters, political actors can increase voter turnout, build support, and create meaningful connections with constituents. This personalized and targeted approach is crucial in engaging with Nigeria's diverse population and fostering a sense of inclusivity and empowerment among voters [13].

Furthermore, mobile media have transformed the landscape of political communication in Nigeria by providing a platform for citizens to participate in political discourse, express their views, and hold political actors accountable. Social media platforms like Twitter, Facebook, and WhatsApp have become popular channels for citizens to discuss political issues, share information, and organize grassroots movements. The democratization of information and the proliferation of user-generated content on mobile platforms have empowered citizens to engage with political processes, challenge dominant narratives, and demand transparency and accountability from political leaders [14].

However, the use of mobile media in political marketing communication in Nigeria also presents challenges and considerations. The spread of misinformation, hate speech, and fake news on mobile platforms has raised concerns about the integrity of political discourse and the potential for social unrest. Political actors must be vigilant in combating misinformation, promoting fact-based information, and fostering digital literacy among citizens to discern credible sources of information from false or misleading content [15]. Moreover, the increasing reliance on money and resources in political marketing has led to a concentration of power and influence in the hands of well-funded campaigns, potentially disadvantaging candidates with limited financial resources and marginalizing grassroots movements. The role of special interest groups, super PACs, and dark money in shaping the political discourse and influencing electoral outcomes has

raised questions about the transparency, integrity, and fairness of the political marketing process [16]. It is why this study focuses itself on re-assessing the role of mobile media in political marketing communication in Nigeria.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopted the qualitative analytical research approach, leveraging on the review of a body of literature, and scholarly opinions from the Internet, books, library, the media, and the civil society.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 Political Marketing

The idea of political marketing builds on a fusion between marketing and politics [17]. Political marketing uses marketing tools, concepts and philosophies within policy development campaigning and internal relations by political parties and organizations. It is seen as a reaction to the rise of political consumerism, and the fall of partisanship, in western democratic societies and emergent democracies [18].

Political marketing entails “the application of marketing principles and procedures in political campaigns by various individuals and organizations” [19]. The significance of marketing in politics has increased as voters become diverse, the market fragmented, and television viewership has disintegrated [20]. Aspiring political candidates seek to create a unique brand identity to match their personality, campaign objectives and voter expectations and blend this identity effortlessly through all communication messages [21]. Imam explains that political marketing infers the usage of marketing tools [22], techniques and methods in the political process. As an activity and method, it reflects the penetration of the political space by marketing and the presence of marketing in politics has a progressively prominent role which is based on the fact that political actors nowadays do not only act according to the principles of marketing but also- think in marketing terms in their political activities [23]. Therefore, political marketing applications have changed from a communication instrument to a coherent way of managing politics, whether policymaking, election canvassing or executing decisions [22, 24]. Political marketing expresses itself in such various activities as focusing a campaign on the salient political issues of swing voters, through the application of sophisticated segmentation techniques a consequent voter- 'customer' orientation, the application of celebrity endorsement strategies as part of integrated marketing communication or the institution of influential directors of Communication [23].

Historically, before Nigeria gained its independence, the colonial administration had organised a couple of general elections without any deliberate and systematic marketing programme undertaken in any of them [25]. Nevertheless, political parties and candidates canvassed for votes through several means. Scholars aver that political marketing started gaining ground after independence, as the 1963 elections witnessed the use of advertising and sales promotions by candidates to propagate their campaign messages [26]. Scholars, such as Achumba and Dixon-Ogbechi [27]; Osuagwu [28], believe that the best of times for political marketing in Nigeria came between 1991 and 1994 when the Social Democratic Party (SDP) and the National Republican Convention (NRC), contested in the series of elections within the that period. These scholars further attributed Abiola's victory to the massive deployment of marketing strategies.

In the meantime, all forms of promotions in political marketing are carried out through a communication or political campaigning strategy [26]. For instance, the use of the name of political candidate duo, which comprises of two syllables, is anticipated to be more easily recognised and shared in the public memory, and management of image and popularity of politicians as a way of marketing which is similar to the marketing of a business product [22]. Political products and personalities are promoted via all channels consumed by the target audience. These channels could include; advertising, publicity, personal selling, and sales promotion, as Sarwate enumerated [29].

3.2 Mobile Media: towards Definition

Mobile media refers to digital content and communication services that are accessed and consumed through mobile devices such as smartphones and tablets. They encompass a wide range of platforms and technologies, including mobile apps, mobile websites, social media, messaging apps, and mobile advertising. Mobile media have become increasingly prevalent in our daily lives, transforming how we access information, interact with others, and engage with content on the go.

One key aspect of mobile media is its ubiquity and convenience. With the widespread adoption of smartphones and mobile internet connectivity, people can access a wealth of information and services anytime, anywhere. This has led to a shift in media consumption patterns, with more individuals turning to mobile devices as their primary source of news, entertainment, and social interaction [4].

Mobile media also offer a high level of personalization and interactivity, allowing users to customise their content consumption experience and engage with brands and services in real-time. Features such as push notifications, location-based services, and in-app messaging enable businesses to deliver targeted and relevant messages to users based on their preferences, behavior, and geographic location [5].

Furthermore, mobile media have revolutionised marketing and advertising practices, offering businesses new opportunities to reach and engage with consumers through targeted campaigns, rich media content, and interactive experiences. Mobile advertising, in particular, have seen significant growth in recent years, with brands leveraging mobile platforms to deliver ads that are highly targeted, visually engaging, and trackable in terms of user interactions and conversions [6]. However, the widespread use of mobile media also raises challenges and considerations, such as privacy concerns, data security, and information overload. Users may be inundated with notifications, advertisements, and sponsored content, leading to a sense of information fatigue and decreasing trust in the content they consume. Moreover, issues of data privacy and digital surveillance have become increasingly salient, prompting discussions about the ethical use of user data and the need for regulatory safeguards to protect consumer rights [30].

4 FORMS OF MOBILE MEDIA

Mobile media encompasses a variety of forms and formats that enable users to access and consume content on their smartphones and other mobile devices. These forms of mobile media play a crucial role in shaping how we communicate, access information, and engage with entertainment in the digital age.

1. **Mobile Apps:** Mobile apps are software applications designed to run on mobile devices such as smartphones and tablets. These apps can serve a wide range of functions, including social networking, gaming, productivity, entertainment, and e-commerce. Mobile apps offer users a personalized and interactive experience, allowing them to access content and services tailored to their preferences and needs. The popularity of mobile apps has transformed how we consume information, conduct business, and connect with others on the go [31].

2. **Mobile Websites:** Mobile websites are optimized versions of traditional websites that are designed to be responsive and accessible on mobile devices. These websites are adapted for smaller screens, touch interfaces, and slower internet connections, making them easy to navigate and interact with on smartphones and tablets. Mobile websites play a crucial role in delivering information, news, and services to mobile users, ensuring a seamless and user-friendly browsing experience across different devices [32].

3. **Social Media Platforms:** Social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and TikTok have become integral forms of mobile media that enable users to connect, share, and engage with content in real-time. These platforms allow users to communicate with friends and followers, share photos and videos, and participate in online communities and discussions. Social media has transformed how we interact with others, consume news, and express ourselves, shaping public discourse and influencing social and political movements [33].

4. **Messaging Apps:** Messaging apps like WhatsApp, Messenger, and WeChat are popular forms of mobile media that enable users to communicate with each other through text, voice, and video messages. These apps offer a convenient and immediate way to stay in touch with friends, family, and colleagues, facilitating real-time conversations and group chats. Messaging apps have evolved to include features such as voice calls, video calls, and file sharing, making them versatile tools for personal and professional communication [34].

Mobile phones: Me mobile phones allow for political communications to be shared to a wide range of constituents and electorate on the go.

5 FUNCTIONS OF MOBILE MEDIA

Mobile media play a vital role in shaping communication, information dissemination, and social interactions in the digital age. The functions of mobile media are diverse and encompass a wide range of activities and services that enable users to access content, connect with others, and engage with digital technologies on their smartphones and other mobile devices.

1. **Communication:** One of the primary functions of mobile media is facilitating communication among individuals, groups, and organizations. Mobile devices enable users to stay connected through voice calls, text messages, emails, and instant messaging apps. These communication tools offer a convenient and efficient way to exchange information, coordinate activities, and maintain relationships in real-time, transcending geographical boundaries and time zones [35].

2. **Information Access:** Mobile media serves as a gateway to vast amounts of information and content available on the internet. Users can access news, entertainment, educational resources, and online services through mobile apps, websites, and social media platforms. Mobile search engines and news aggregators provide personalized recommendations and updates, enabling users to stay informed and engaged with current events and interests on the go [36].

3. **Entertainment:** Mobile media offers a wide range of entertainment options, including streaming services, gaming apps, social media platforms, and multimedia content. Users can watch videos, listen to music, play games, and engage with interactive content on their smartphones, providing a source of relaxation, enjoyment, and social connection. The portability and accessibility of mobile entertainment make it a popular form of leisure activity for individuals of all ages [37].

4. **Social Interaction:** Social media platforms and messaging apps are key functions of mobile media that enable users to connect, share, and interact with others online. Users can create profiles, share updates, comment on posts, and participate in online communities and discussions. Social media fosters social connections, facilitates information exchange, and

enables individuals to express themselves, forming virtual networks and relationships that transcend physical boundaries [38].

6 MOBILE MEDIA IN POLITICAL MARKETING COMMUNICATION

Mobile media have increasingly played a significant role in political marketing communication in Nigeria, offering political candidates and parties new opportunities to reach and engage with voters in innovative ways. The use of mobile media in political campaigns has transformed how political actors communicate their messages, mobilize support, and influence public opinion in the Nigerian context.

Mobile media provide political actors in Nigeria with a direct and cost-effective way to connect with voters, disseminate campaign messages, and mobilize support. Platforms such as social media, messaging apps, and mobile websites enable candidates and parties to engage with a large and diverse audience in real-time, regardless of geographical location. Mobile media allows for targeted and personalized communication, allowing political actors to tailor their messages to specific voter demographics and preferences [39].

Despite its advantages, mobile media in political marketing communication in Nigeria also presents challenges and considerations. Issues such as online misinformation, fake news, and social media manipulation can spread rapidly through mobile channels, influencing public opinion and undermining the integrity of political discourse. Moreover, concerns about data privacy, security, and digital surveillance raise questions about the ethical use of mobile media in political campaigns and the protection of user information [40].

The use of mobile media in political marketing communication in Nigeria has profound implications for democratic practices and processes. Mobile media has the potential to enhance political transparency, accountability, and citizen engagement by providing voters with access to information, promoting political participation, and fostering public dialogue. However, the misuse of mobile media for spreading misinformation, hate speech, and divisive narratives can undermine trust in institutions, exacerbate social tensions, and erode democratic values [41].

7 ROLES OF MOBILE MEDIA IN POLITICAL MARKETING COMMUNICATION IN NIGERIA

Mobile media have emerged as a powerful tools in political marketing communication in Nigeria, offering political actors platforms to engage with voters, disseminate campaign messages, and mobilise support in innovative ways. The roles of mobile media in political marketing communication in Nigeria are diverse and impactful, reshaping how political campaigns are conducted, information is shared, and public opinion is influenced.

1. **Voter Mobilisation:** Mobile media play a crucial role in mobilising and engaging voters in the Nigerian political landscape. Political candidates and parties leverage mobile platforms such as SMS, social media, and mobile apps to reach out to supporters, rally volunteers, and encourage voter turnout during elections. Mobile media enables real-time communication with voters, allowing campaigns to provide updates on events, share campaign materials, and mobilize supporters to participate in campaign activities and polling [42].

2. **Information Dissemination:** Mobile media serves as a key channel for disseminating political information and campaign messages to a wide audience in Nigeria. Candidates and parties use mobile websites, social media, and messaging apps to share their policy platforms, communicate their positions on key issues, and respond to voter inquiries. Mobile media enables political actors to reach voters directly, bypassing traditional media gatekeepers and offering a more personalized and targeted communication strategy [43].

3. **Political Engagement:** Mobile media plays a vital role in fostering political engagement and public dialogue among Nigerian citizens. Platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, and WhatsApp serve as spaces for citizens to discuss political issues, engage with candidates and parties, and share their opinions on social and political developments. Mobile media enhances citizen participation in the political process, enabling individuals to express their views, follow campaigns, and interact with decision-makers in a digital and interactive format [44].

4. **Monitoring and Accountability:** Mobile media can also serve as tools for monitoring political activities, promoting transparency, and holding elected officials accountable in Nigeria. Citizens can use mobile platforms to report electoral irregularities, share information about campaign finance, and raise awareness about political corruption. Mobile media empowers citizens to engage in political oversight, demand accountability from leaders, and contribute to a more transparent and responsive political system [45].

However, the roles of mobile media in political marketing communication in Nigeria are transformative, offering new opportunities for political actors to engage with voters, disseminate information, and promote democratic participation. While mobile media have the potential to enhance political communication and citizen engagement, they also raise challenges related to misinformation, privacy concerns, and digital divides that must be addressed to ensure a fair and inclusive political environment in Nigeria.

8 DISCUSSION

Mobile media have had a profound impact on political marketing communication in Nigeria, transforming how political actors engage with voters, disseminate information, and mobilize support in the digital era. The widespread use of mobile devices and social media platforms has revolutionized political communication strategies, providing new opportunities for political candidates and parties to connect with voters and shape public opinion. Mobile media has revolutionized voter outreach strategies in Nigerian politics, enabling political campaigns to reach a wider audience in real-time. Social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, and WhatsApp have become essential tools for political candidates and parties to engage with voters, share campaign updates, and mobilize support. By leveraging mobile platforms, political actors can target specific demographics, personalize their messages, and create interactive content that resonates with voters, ultimately influencing their perceptions and voting behavior [46].

The use of mobile media has facilitated the rapid dissemination of political information and messaging during election campaigns in Nigeria. Candidates and parties can utilize mobile websites, SMS alerts, and social media posts to share their policy platforms, communicate their vision, and respond to voter inquiries. Mobile media enables political actors to bypass traditional media channels and speak directly to voters, enhancing transparency and accessibility of information in the political process [47]. Mobile media has fostered increased citizen engagement and participation in Nigerian politics by providing a platform for open dialogue and discussion. Social media has become a space for citizens to voice their opinions, engage with political candidates, and express their views on key issues. Mobile platforms enable citizens to follow political developments, stay informed about election campaigns, and actively contribute to public discourse, ultimately strengthening democratic participation and accountability [48].

Mobile media plays a crucial role in promoting election monitoring, transparency, and accountability in Nigerian politics. Citizens can use mobile platforms to report electoral irregularities, share election updates, and monitor campaign activities in real-time. Mobile media empowers voters to hold political actors accountable, demand transparency in the electoral process, and contribute to a more inclusive and fair democratic system in Nigeria [49].

9 CONCLUSION

The impact of mobile media in political marketing communication in Nigeria has been significant and transformative, reshaping the dynamics of political campaigning, citizen engagement, and democratic processes. Mobile media have revolutionised how political actors interact with voters, disseminate information, and mobilise support, offering new opportunities and challenges in the evolving digital landscape of Nigerian politics. The use of mobile media has facilitated direct and targeted communication between political candidates and voters, enabling real-time engagement, personalised messaging, and interactive content that can influence voter perceptions and behaviour. Social media platforms have become essential tools for political campaigns to reach a wider audience, share campaign updates, and mobilise support, contributing to the democratisation of information and political participation in Nigeria.

However, the reliance on mobile media in political marketing communication also presents challenges, such as the spread of misinformation, privacy concerns, and digital divides that can undermine the integrity of political discourse and electoral processes. The misuse of mobile platforms for spreading fake news, promoting hate speech, and manipulating public opinion highlights the need for ethical guidelines, regulatory frameworks, and digital literacy initiatives to ensure a fair, transparent, and inclusive political environment in Nigeria. As mobile technology continues to evolve and play an increasingly central role in political communication, it is essential for political actors, policymakers, and civil society to adapt their strategies and mechanisms to leverage the potential of mobile media for enhancing political participation, accountability, and democratic governance in Nigeria. By harnessing the power of mobile media responsibly, ethically, and inclusively, Nigeria can continue to navigate the opportunities and challenges presented by digital technologies in shaping its political landscape and advancing democratic practices.

10 RECOMMENDATIONS

1. There is need to assess the effectiveness of mobile media strategies utilized by political actors in Nigeria, including the use of targeted messaging, interactive content, and engagement tactics.
2. Political actors should adopt a multi-platform approach made possible by mobile media in political marketing communication, utilizing a combination of social media, messaging apps, mobile websites, and SMS to reach a diverse audience. By diversifying their mobile media strategies, political campaigns can maximize their outreach, engage with different demographic groups, and ensure a comprehensive communication strategy that resonates with voters.
3. Political campaigns should tailor their content to suit the specific characteristics and preferences of mobile users. This includes creating mobile-friendly content that is visually appealing, succinct, and easy to consume on small screens. By optimizing content for mobile devices, political actors can enhance user experience, increase engagement, and effectively communicate their message to mobile audiences.
4. To enhance engagement and foster two-way communication with voters, political campaigns should incorporate interactive elements into their mobile media strategies. This can include interactive polls, quizzes, live chats, and user-generated content that encourage active participation and dialogue with supporters. By creating interactive experiences,

political actors can deepen connections with voters, gather valuable feedback, and build a sense of community around their campaign.

COMPETING INTERESTS

The authors have no relevant financial or non-financial interests to disclose.

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