AFRICAN MIGRATORY DIGITAL AUDIENCE: COULD MEDIATED TECHNOLOGIES RESHAPE THE DEMOCRATIC ECOLOGY IN NIGERIA?

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Abstract
This paper examined the strategic roles played by digital mediated technologies like smart phones and tablets, and social media networks like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, in African democratic and electoral processes for sound governance with particular reference to 2019 Nigeria General Elections. The study adopted the survey research method with a sample size of four hundred (400) and discovered that INEC used mediated technologies and server to collate and transmit results, but abandoned it half way and announced results not transmitted to the central server. Among the recommendations is that the Nigerian electoral law should as well be amended to provide for the full adoption and use of mediated technologies for collation and transmission of electoral results.

Keywords: election, technology, democracy, mass media

Background to the Study

Mass media acceptance and usage in Africa coincides with the colonial era. In the beginning was the radio which appeared effective for social mobilization and information on politics. Eventually, screen-based television became fashionable with attendant quality of sight-evidence. The media momentum was geared higher when mediated technologies such as social media, mobile

technologies, internet, computer servers and allied technologies were integrated into African environments. It emerged visibly as part and parcel of African lifestyles, depending on the degree of interests, ability, convenience and affordability. Zavattaro (2013, p.245), while expounding on the work of Farazmand (2010), observes that the application of mediated technologies has a far reaching implication for democratic governance, hence:

> Social media and Web 2.0 are umbrella terms that encompass the various activities that integrate technology, social interaction, and content creation. Social media use many technologies and forms, such as blogs, wikis, photo and video sharing, podcasts, social networking, mashups, and virtual worlds

Therefore, it is sensible to suggest that the migration of the African audience to digital mediated technologies was because of the high usage and frequency and the varying degrees of opportunities the technologies offer, especially in comparison to the earlier versions; namely, radio and television which are the traditional media. While it could be understood that such mediated technologies have exerted great influence on the African environment for more than a decade, it is yet at cross-roads with respect to being integrated into the African electoral mainstream, especially in Nigeria. This also has far reaching consequence on sound governance. Here, sound governance according to Farazmand (2017) and Elom, Ekwunife, Ukeje and Ndukwe (2020) is the governance that has all the quality characteristics of governance that is superior to good governance and is sound technically, professionally, organizationally, managerially, politically, democratically and economically. Sound governance is also sound in terms of capacity, and anticipatory behaviour; it is democratic in character, responsive, and competent; and its cultural values are embedded in societal values and structures. Farazmand (2017) argues that this approach in administration goes far beyond good governance, maintaining that to govern effectively; citizens must be involved

as active parts of innovation in policy and capacity building for governance and public administration. This is also as forte which this paper advances through mediated technologies.

In Kenya's presidential election, Raila Odinga of the opposition accused the incumbent of hacking and benefitting from the electoral body's mismanagement of electronic system at the process of transmission and collation of election results. Also in Zimbabwe, human rights organisations were hit by cyber-attacks during and after the African country's election, leading to suspicions of government suppression of election monitoring. Techweek Europe reported the attacks, saying that some were obviously targeted while other disruptions might have been merely collateral damage. Citizens of Zimbabwe had set up a number of human rights and political websites after the last election in 2008, which were apparently hacked or taken offline by Distributed Denial of Service (DDoS) attacks prior to, during and after this election (Ipsos, 2018).

The post-election situation in Nigerian saw the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) struggling to maintain a balance on whether mediated technologies were used for collation and transmission of election results from the various polling units. The Nigerian opposition party, Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) claimed victory based on the electoral results obtained from the central server. Meanwhile, the electoral body debunked the opposition party's argument and insisted that mediated technologies were not used for collation and transmission of election results, citing legal constraints to such a process and proclaimed the Muhammadu Buhari of the All Peoples Congress (APC), the winner of 2019 Nigeria presidential election (Yahaya, 2019).

Prior to the election, Nigerian electoral body announced a policy statement banning the use of social media and mobile technologies at the polling units during the election period. Millions of Nigerians found the policy statement

distasteful, outdated and offensive to human sensibilities. During the elections, many voters actually turned up with phones and other digital devices which were used to document and transmit electoral information. This brought to limelight those aspects of the elections that the electoral empire could have kept totally in the dark as the voters struggled under tension to find out what is happening in other regions and constituencies.

Statement of the Problem

Even as mediated technologies have recorded huge successes in the African environment, African governments at various levels have failed to integrate them into the mainstream of the electoral structure to ensure efficiency and optimum electoral credibility. This is especially so in Nigeria where the human elements have consistently denied the Nigerian public the much expected new democracy that places greatest value on the peoples' choices and deep respect for Nigerian public human rights. Such setbacks have placed Nigeria on a disadvantaged position of maximizing the opportunities that have to do with Nigerian public migration to digital mediated technologies, social media and mobile technologies. In this study, the worry is about the seeming inconsistency in the statements of INEC on the use of server and digital mediated technologies during the 2019 elections. This is especially so with the conflicting reports and statements from the public and some ad hoc staff of INEC. While some ad hoc staff claim that they transmitted results electronically, the management of the electoral body averred otherwise. This makes it imperative to actually ascertain if the electorates used smart phones to document visual information during the 2019 elections, and if INEC is making valid statement on the non-transmission of results electronically.

Objectives of the Study This study seeks to:

1. Determine if after the 2019 Nigerian general elections, the electoral umpire, Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), was making inconsistent statements on the application of server and allied digital technologies.

2. Determine the extent to which Nigerians relied on the use of smart phones, SMS, call, YouTube, Facebook, Twitter and Instagram for political information before, during and after 2019 general elections.

3. Determine if Nigerians used their smart phones and other digital technologies to document visual information during the 2019 general elections especially at the polling unit.

Review of Related Literature

2019 General Elections and the Use of Digital Mediated Technologies

The American experience as regards changing the democratic structure as a result of the migratory nature of the audience to digital technologies, to a large extent, has a bearing on African migratory digital audience. In Africa, research shows that Internet-enabled political engagement is attractive to voters, compared to their political engagement in the offline world (Cheeseman, Lynch and Wills, 2018). These researchers observe that the migration to digital technologies in elections over the last two decades in order to monitor politicians and election officials (particularly in Africa and Asia) was mainly informed by malpractice and manipulations. Social media followership of candidates by voters and vice versa is critical in political engagement as users who follow political parties and their candidates on Facebook and Twitter can engage directly and more effectively. Hence, Cheeseman et al (2018, p.l3) note:

> The hope is that new technology will enhance the electoral environment in three main ways: by making the functioning of the electoral commission more robust and efficient, by reducing the scope for electoral manipulation, and by generating greater

clarity and transparency regarding election outcomes. On this basis, the proponents of new technology also expect it to boost the process's legitimacy — and hence that of the elected government.

The 2019 general elections, like previous elections since 2011, provided political aspirants the avenue to use digital media tools to connect with voters and constituents. For instance, Ekine (2010) reported that President Goodluck Jonathan had neatly 3,000,000 followers on his Facebook account following the step of President Barrack Obama of the United States. Corroborating further, Okoro and Nwafor (2013) conducted a study entitled "social and political participation in Nigeria during the 2011 general elections: The lapses and the lessons". The findings of their study revealed that 93% of the respondents attested to the fact that they used social media for participation during the election. Respondents also said that they used different social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, as well as SMS calls to participate in the election. This shows the migratory nature of the Nigerian audience to digital humanities. Ekwunife, Ukeje, Ojiaku and Robinson (2020a) capture this thought when they write that the new media which are internet-facilitated enable ordinary citizens to participate in democratic governance in order to fulfil their civic responsibility.

The People's Democratic Party (PDP) condemned the decision by Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to bar electorates from coming to the polling centres with phones. PDP specifically accused INEC of a surreptitious move to prevent the global community from knowing its plan to rig the 2019 general elections. While describing smart phones as the easiest means of communication in the society, during elections, the PDP stressed that the decision to ban its use was the strategy of INEC and the APC to rig the 2019 elections (Corleons, 2019).

In response to the many agitations against its policy statement, INEC said it did not ban the use of mobile phone at polling units, adding that the smart phones would not be allowed into the cubicle when voters want to cast their votes. According to the commission, politicians are planning to devise means of intensifying vote-buying and selling during election using smart phones (Ibeh, 2019).

The above response and clarification gave prominence to the use of smart phones during the 2019 general elections. During the 2019 general elections, thousands of tweets with #BuhariisWinning and #AtikuisWinning were circulating on Twitter. Starting on elections day, pictures with unverified information were shared on Facebook and in WhatsApp groups. Deutsche Welle (2019) reported that at about ten o'clock in the morning of elections day (Saturday, 23 of February, 2019), ballot boxes stuffed with ballot papers were brought to a polling station in the capital, Abuja. Voters refused to cast their ballots and rioted demanding replacement of the boxes. INEC replaced the ballot boxes, but by that time, videos of the protest had already gone viral on social media platforms, filmed and posted by voters using smart phones. In spite of the numerous merits which the digital media present, researchers (Ekwunife, Ukeje, Ojiaku and Eguavoen, 2020b; Ekwunife, Robinson, Ukeje and Ojiaku, 2020c)) have argued that the absence of bureaucracy and checkpoints in their dissemination of contents dispose them as unprofessional by the spreading of unverified and false contents since there is no gate-keeping to determine what one says at any particular time.

However, Olowokere and Audu-Bako (2019, p.12) identified three major issues underlining the tremendous use of social media tools during the 2019 general elections. Firstly, it reflects a global trend _towards "internet elections" or "eelectioneering". Presidential aspirants like Atiku Abubakar, Kingsley Moghalu, Oby Ezekwesili, Sola Sowore, among others all had Twitter and other social media accounts. Secondly there is the tendency of the

Nigerian Civil Society and the electorates to take up social media as a tool for improving the efficiency of election observation. Prior to the conduct of the 2019 elections, elections in Nigeria had been largely flawed by vote rigging and other electoral malpractices.

INEC Use of Server in 2019 General Elections: The Controversies and Intrigues

INEC use of server during the 2019 general elections was one issue that was loaded with alleged intrigues and controversies. While INEC denied the use of server, some of its staff, and the PDP as well as its presidential candidate during the 2019 presidential elections stand on the point that INEC used server for collation of results.

Onyeji, Kabir and Olufemi (2019) submitted that the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) received Nl.47 billion to replace and maintain computer servers for use during the 2019 general elections. It is not clear though how the servers, which store computer data, were used during the polls or whether election results were transmitted electronically. INEC insists it did not send results electronically to a server, but some ad hoc staff used during the polls have claimed they were instructed to send the results to a "central server".

Onyeji, Kabir and Olufemi (2019) reported that INEC officials who were deployed as electoral officers for the 2019 presidential election said that they transmitted results electronically to a 'central server' through smart card readers. This, they said, was done in compliance with the directive given by the

Commission during a three- day training before the polls. According to the report, an ad-hoc staff for Polling Unit Eight (PU8), Ode Ajibade Ward, Ilorin East Local Government, explained how they handled the results as instructed. Similarly, Okakwu and Yahaya (2019) revealed that another ad-hoc staff of the

Independent National Electoral Commission told the Presidential Election Petition Tribunal that he transmitted 2019 election results to a central server as instructed by the Commission. The witness, Olufemi Ogunride, who described himself as an INEC ad-hoc staff who was trained for three days ahead of the elections, said he received election result sheets from the presiding officer which he transferred into the smart card readers and consequently transmitted into the server, Mr Ogunride, said though he had never seen the said server, he just transmitted information from the smart card readers into the server based on what he had been taught.

The controversy generated by the inconsistent statements of INEC has been traced to INEC's history of election manipulation and rigging; Iroanusi (2019) posited that elections are rigged through late arrival of materials to polling units. By making sure election materials arrive late at an opponent's polling unit, his/her votes will be drastically reduced. This way, many voters on the queue will not be able to cast their votes once the time frame for voting elapses.

Also many potential voters will return home in anger without voting.

Digital Mediated Technologies' Influence on Mobilization for Electoral Participation

Digital mediated technologies have unarguably enhanced the communication process in many human endeavours. The political environment, no doubt, is experiencing a great deal of the impact of digital media phenomenon (Nwabueze and Ezebuenyi, 2012). However, the growing recognition and utilization of digital media in the political process underscore the role which they have assumed in the world today.

In Nigeria, for instance, the unwholesome reliance on godfatherism is gradually giving way to online tactical crafting and packaging of persuasive messages by campaign managers and political parties with the aim of

consciously persuading Nigerian voters to vote for their candidates (Ezebuenyi and Ejezieh, 2012).

According to Dunu and Oraka (2004), digital media technologies have furnished the communication industry with unprecedented positive revolutionary changes. According to them, Nigeria, like other countries of the world, has also benefited in terms of improved technology output, variety of offerings, improved resources and quality output occasioned by the digital media revolution. This art and science of information management through digital media seem to be gaining more grounds in Nigeria's political landscape and having serious impact on the democratic ecology of the nation. Thus, political advertising is today carried online (Kur and Melladu, 2007).

Similarly, Ikem (2011, p.5) argues that "the place of digital media to rally political support is no longer in doubt. To advance the conversation and mobilize political support, digital media have become a crucial political tool... In fact, the social media provide a potential to stream and broadcast real live political rallies and party conventions online, in such a way that supporters, who cannot participate physically can be involved from a distance effortlessly." Commenting further, Ikem (2011) observes that whereas the dependence of politicians on traditional media for political campaigns will certainly be noticeable 'and cannot be completely discarded, modem trends of digital media seem to be eroding the gains of traditional media. In a changing world, it is impossible to advance democratic change and development with old tools. This, therefore, encourages the use of digital media in the field of governance and political development to increase citizens' participation in the political process. It brings about an air of abundant democratic principles as nobody is left out thus resulting in unbridled practice of citizen journalism. Hence, the digital media enable the masses to keep an eye on the government

in the form of surveillance (Cheeseman et al., 2018). The positive effect of this on governance is hydra-headed as it checks the government, making it alert, responsive and technically sound in terms of anticipatory behaviour (Farazmand, 2017). Hence, the subject, "e-government" has been presented as a vision that will give impetus to greater socio-political interactivity.

Digital Mediated Technologies in Democratic Consolidation
It is imperative to point out here that since the birth of modern democracies, freedom of speech and press independence have been regarded as crucial and indispensable conditions for the effective functioning of a democratic political system. The demise of authoritarian regimes and spread of democracy in Nigeria and other parts of the world in the late 20th and early 21st centuries have further increased interest in the role of digital media in facilitating democratic transition and enabling subsequent democratic consolidation particularly in Africa, Eastern Europe and Latin America (Stetka and Ornebring, 2012).

Data collected from interviews which were conducted on the role of digital media on democratic consolidation in Nigeria (especially with respect to 2011 general election) by Ojo (2014) show that majority of the respondents submitted that digital media have helped to overcome previous scarcity of information during the electioneering process, leading to increased transparency and reduced tension. In Farazmand's (2017) opinion, democracy is a feature of sound governance, and this is characterized by transparency, co-production, responsiveness and competence that is globally accepted. Moreover, digital media based monitoring shows encouraging signs of robustness concerning information quality and mobility.

The migratory nature of Nigerian digital audience has significantly exerted lots of influence on the democratic structure of the nation by reshaping the

democratic ecology. It has influenced political participation, political expressiveness, political engagement and interaction, and many other elements of the democratic structure which in turn enhances sound governance (Cheeseman et al., 2018; Farazmand, 2017; Bratton et al., 2005).

Digital Mediated Technologies as Instruments for International Involvement in Politics

It is no longer accurate to dismiss international influences on elections. A multitude of international activities and processes permeate elections in new multiparty states in particular, and they epitomize the prevalence of international influences on domestic politics even in a realm once thought to be strictly domestic. Colonial legacies have not only influenced electoral institutions, but countries may adopt electoral technologies or institutions because they learn from or are pressured by international actors, or because they emulate other countries.

Domestic actors may use international electoral standards to mobilize protests, just as the international community may use these standards to justify interference. Citizens and politicians may learn electoral norms from their repeated interaction with international organizations and agencies. Finally, and most directly, domestic politicians may cheat less or compromise on election disputes because international actors change their incentives for cooperation. Unfortunately, there may be both intentional counter-efforts and unintended negative consequences of well-intended efforts to improve elections. Thus, for better or for worse, many different mechanisms can shape electoral institutions, electoral conduct, and even whether elections are held at all.

With mediated technologies, international actors directly and indirectly influence electoral outcomes. This influence is powered by the fact that with

the migratory tendency of the audience in most developing nations like Nigeria, they seem to believe more in the authenticity of information from foreign digital media than the national media or political actors. The number of people exposed to the Internet in Africa in general, and Nigeria in particular, keeps growing every year.

In Nigeria, with an estimated population of 200,962,417 as at June 2019, the estimated number of Internet users is given as 123,486,615, which is about 61, 45% increase compared with the level of Internet penetration in 2000 which is given to be 200,000. This shows high migratory tendency to digital mediated technologies. In the Premium Times of 20th November, 2018 report entitled, "How Obama plotted my defeat in 2015" written by Ogundipe (2018), former President, Goodluck Jonathan, alleged that Barak Obama used digital media to influence Nigeria's 2015 general elections. According to Jonathan, "on March 23, 2015, President Obama himself took the unusual step of releasing a video message directly to all Nigerians and telling them how to vote. In that video, Obama urged Nigerians to open the next chapter by their votes. Those who understood subliminal language deciphered that he was prodding the electorate to vote for the opposition to form a new government." This message by Obama, disseminated through the digital media, to a large extent influenced the Nigerian voters and fixed the election.

In a related development, a report from The Guardian of April 4, 2018 entitled, "Revealed: Graphic video used by Cambridge Analytica to influence Nigerian election", written by Cadwalladr (2018) alleged that Cambridge Analytica, through digital media sought to influence the Nigerian presidential election in
2015 by using graphically violent imagery to portray a candidate as a supporter of sharia law who would brutally suppress dissenters and negotiate

with militant Islamists, a video passed to British MPs reveal. It was said that Cambridge Analytica was hired by a Nigerian billionaire to run a campaign in support of Goodluck Jonathan, a Christian, and the video was targeted at his Muslim opponent, Muhammadu Buhari. There is no suggestion however that Jonathan was aware of the campaign (Cadwalladr, 2018).

The 2007 general elections was also said to have been manipulated using digital media. Canadian data analytics expert, Christopher Wylie, released documents to the Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee that suggest that Strategic Communication Laboratory (SCL) manipulated the 2007 Nigerian general elections. It was submitted that SCL boasted of manipulating the 2007 elections by using religious leaders to suppress the vote. Information about SCL's activities in Nigeria influencing Nigerian elections show that it uses variety of tactics including the misuse of Internet browsing data and personal information harvested from Facebook (York, 2018).

In view of the 2019 general elections, an article by Sahara Reporters (2019, para. 1-15) entitled, "Confirmed: Facebook Allowed Fake News Ads Ahead of Nigeria's Elections", the digital media, particularly Facebook has been found to be instrumental to swaying the opinion of Nigerian voters through fake news. According to Sahara Reporters, Facebook allowed fake news ads ahead of Nigeria's elections. Herman Wasserrnan, Professor of Media Studies at the University of Cape Town, said: "This is worrying. One would like to see Facebook doing more to fact-check claims in political advertising during a political campaign period. The evidence seems to suggest that their system does not work as effectively as it should" (Sahara Reporters, 2019, para.1-15). According to the Sahara Reporters article, an investigation by Al Jazeera discovered that even false political ads can find their way into the social media space, as the automated ad approval system can be easily tricked to

some level. To prove this claim, Al Jazeera placed some ads on Facebook containing false claims which were eventually approved. One of the claims was that Boko Haram would take part in the elections. The ads were estimated by Facebook's system to possibly reach between 7 and 17 million people. Other claims were that US President Donald Trump supported Atiku Abubakar, presidential candidate of the People's Democratic Party (PDP); that the deadline for collection of Permanent Voter Cards (PVCs) which according to Cheeseman et al. (2018) was expected to enhance "the integrity of the electoral process", was extended by one week; and that refugees would get a voting extension after February l6. After slight changes were made to trick the Facebook automated ad system, all four false claims were approved. However, the one on refugees was eventually taken down. The ads were, however, deactivated by Al Jazeera before they ran on the platform and the website where the news stories were posted was hidden from the public to ensure the stories were not visible to search engines. So, there is no denying the fact that digital media are influencing and reshaping the democratic ecology of politics in Nigeria.

Theoretical Underpinning

This work is anchored in the theory of Technological Determinism. The technological determinism theory was propounded by Marshal McLuhan (1962). The theory states that media technologies shape how we as individuals in a society think, feel, act and how a society operates as we move from one technological age to another. According to technological determinists, particular technical developments, communication technologies or media, or most broadly, technology in general are the sole or prime antecedent causes of changes in society, and technology is seen as the fundamental condition underlying the pattern of social organization.

In its most extreme form, the entire form of society is perceived as being determined by technology and new technologies indeed transform society at every level, including institutions, social interactions and individuals. The thrust of technological determinism theory revolves on the fact that technology has overwhelming effects on our lives. This idea is manifest in the popular imagination and political rhetoric, for example, in the idea that the Internet is revolutionizing the economy and society (Adler, 2006).

Griffin (2000, pp. 313- 325) elaborates McLuhan's theory of 1962 by saying that we learn, feel and think the way we do because of the message we receive through the current technology that is available. Indeed, with the development of technology, digital mediated technologies have the potency of interfering and reshaping the democratic ecology in Nigeria.

Methodology

The researchers used survey research method to generate data for the study. The rationale for the choice of this approach was to enable the researchers gather the opinions of a cross-section of people which are necessary for explanation of certain phenomena. The data generated from survey were complemented with the opinions and experiences of media experts teaching mass communication in selected universities in Enugu State, Nigeria. The essence of adopting this approach was to elicit requisite data from working electoral stakeholders, as well as the Nigerian electorate on how the migratory digital nature of African audience is giving credence to mediated technologies in terms of reshaping the democratic ecology in Nigeria.

Greater attention was paid by the researchers on generating quantitative data while the qualitative data were used to elicit clarifications to support the quantitative data. Copies of the questionnaire were used to gather quantitative data while oral interviews were used to collect the qualitative

data. A total of 400 copies of the questionnaire were distributed among the respondents. Out of the 400 copies of questionnaire administered, 398 were returned and all the 398 copies returned were properly filled and were used for analysis. Doubtless, the response rate was found to be significant while the mortality rate was insignificant. The major reason for the high degree of response was that the researcher used face to face method of questionnaire distribution.

Data Presentation and Analysis

A total of four hundred (400) copies of the questionnaire were distributed to four hundred respondents. Out of the total number distributed, three hundred and ninety eight (398) copies of the questionnaire were retrieved and found useful for this analysis.

Research Question One:*Is the electoral umpire (INEC) making inconsistent statements after the 2019 Nigerian general elections on the use of server and allied digital technologies?*

Table 1: Showing respondents' views on whether the electoral umpire (INEC) was making inconsistent statements after the 2019 Nigerian general elections on the use of server and allied digital technologies.

Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	385	96.73
No	0	0
Can't say	13	3.27
Table	**398**	**100**

Table 1 above indicates that 385 or 96.73% of the respondents affirmed that the electoral umpire (INEC) made inconsistent statements after the 2019 Nigerian general elections on the use of server and allied digital technologies, while 13 or 3.27% of the respondents had nothing to say on the issue.

From the data presented in Table 3 above, it is obvious that most of the respondents agreed that INEC made inconsistent statements after the 2019 Nigerian general elections on the use of server and allied digital technologies. This agrees with the publication of Premium Times entitled, "INEC Received N1.47 Billion for Servers Ahead of 2019 Elections." It was published that INEC received Nl.47 billion to replace and maintain computers for use during the 2019 general elections. According to the report, though it was not clear how the servers which store computer data were used during the polls, the denial of 'he use of servers by INEC raised concerns over the consistency of the electoral umpire.

Research Question Two: *To what extent did Nigerians rely on the use of smart phones, SMS, call, YouTube, Facebook, Twitter and Instagram for political information before, during and after 2019 general elections?*

Table 2: Respondents' views on the extent Nigerians relied on smart phones, SMS, call, YouTube, Facebook, Twitter and lnstagram for political information before, during and after 2019 general elections.

Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
High	321	80.65
Very high	37	9.30
Low	21	5.28
Very low	19	4.77
Total	**398**	**100**

Table 2 above shows that 321 or 80.65% of the respondents agreed that the extent Nigerians relied on digital technologies and social media for political information before, during and after 2019 general elections was high; 37 or 9.30% of the respondents said that the extent was very high; 21 or 5.28% of the respondents said that the extent was low, while 19 or 4.77% of the sample indicates that the extent was very low. The result in table 2 above reveals that majority of the respondents affirmed that Nigerian audience has high reliance on digital technologies and social media for political information before,

during and after 2019 general elections. The Nigerian audience has a very serious migratory tendency towards digital media, and they seem to have more confidence in such media than the conventional media which are known to be mostly controlled by the government and therefore have no reflection of the realities of the political issues in the nation.

Research Question Three:*Did Nigerians use YouTube, Facebook, Twitter and Instagram to document visual information during the 2019 general elections especially at the polling unit?*

Table 3: Showing respondents' opinions on whether Nigerians used YouTube, Facebook, Twitter and Instagram to document visual information during the 2019 general elections especially at the poling unit.

Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	365	91.71
No	9	2.61
Undecided	24	6.03
Total	**398**	**100**

Table 3 above shows that 365 or 91.71% of the respondents agreed that Nigerians used smart phones and other digital technologies to document visual information during the 2019 general elections especially at the poling unit; 9 or 2.61% disagreed, while 24 or 6.03% of the respondents were not sure. It can be gleaned from Table 3 above that the electorates in Nigeria extensively used smart phones and other digital technologies to document visual information during the 2019 general elections, and further posted the information in form of election update from different quarters on digital media platforms.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study reveals that the migratory nature of African digital audience is yielding grounds to mediated technologies in terms of how they reshape the

democratic ecology for sound governance in Nigeria. Due to high exposure to digital media and alien mediated technologies by the Nigerian electorate, the democratic decisions, political awareness and consciousness of the Nigerian public is almost completely determined by information transmitted through mediated technologies. These technologies are utilized in diverse forms by political actors and their international allies to disseminate manipulative and persuasive messages which to a very large extent influence the political decisions of the Nigerian electorate. The result of the study also indicates that mediated technologies enabled the masses to participate in democratic governance while foreign digital mediated technologies played strategic roles in the 2019 Nigerian general elections.

The findings of the study unveil that digital mediated technologies among other things influenced the choice of candidates to vote, influenced the acceptance and/or rejection of the result released by INEC, popularised the "saints and demons" politics, enhanced identity branding, and were very instrumental to the externalization of Nigerian politics. Also, INEC used mediated technologies and a server to collate and transmit results, but abandoned it half way and announced results not transmitted to the central server. Based on the findings and conclusions reached, the researchers therefore recommend as follows:

- A more organized and responsible use of smart phones, SMS, call, YouTube, Facebook, Twitter and Instagram is needed for sound governance in such socially sensitive times as now to curtail possibilities of misuse. One must understand that users are ordinary people who may not be professionally groomed to correctly script information for mass distribution.

- The Nigerian electoral law should be amended to provide for the full adoption and use of servers for collation and transmission of electoral results.

- Government, in trying to regulate the operations of social media, should put strategies in place to authenticate information on social media space and verify or regulate "who posts what" in these media.

- Politicians and electoral stakeholders should embrace digital media for successful political enlightenment, mobilisation and campaigns that grant the electorate the interactive opportunity with political candidates and electoral stakeholders.

- There is also need for Nigerian government to constitute an independent body charged with the responsibility of vetting, allowing or disallowing mediated political messages transmitted to Nigerian voters through smart phones, SMS, call, YouTube, Facebook, Twitter and Instagram during electioneering campaigns and elections.

- Digital media content creators and users should be guided by the journalistic principles of objectivity and fairness while designing and transmitting political messages to the Nigerian voting public during political campaigns and elections.

Compliance with Ethical Standards

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