

**T.C.  
ISTANBUL AYDIN UNIVERSITY  
INSTITUTE OF GRADUATE STUDIES**



**MEDIA EFFECT ON ELECTORAL OUTCOME IN NIGERIA A STUDY OF  
2015 GENERAL ELECTIONS**

**MASTER'S THESIS**

**Rita Omali USHIE**

**Department of Political Science and International Relations  
Political Science and International Relations Program**

**MARCH, 2022**



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**MARCH, 2022**

**ONAY FORMU**



## **DECLARATION**

I hereby declare that all information contained in this thesis document has been obtained and presented in accordance with academic rules. I also declare that, as required by these rules and conduct of thesis writing, I have fully and clearly cited and referenced all materials and findings which are not original with regards to this thesis. (.../.../2021)



Rita Omali USHIE

## **FOREWORD**

My heartfelt appreciation goes to God for granting me success throughout my academic pursuit in the achievement of my Master's Degree (M.A) in Political Science and International Relations at Istanbul Aydin University. My deepest appreciation goes to my thesis supervisor, Assist. Prof. Dr Mustafa Poyraz Kolluoglu for believing in my thesis work and dedicating his time and energy towards the completion of my thesis work. I am most indebted to my academic advisor Prof. Dr Hatice Deniz, my lecturers, Prof. Egemen Bagis, Prof. Dr Haluk Zulfikar and Prof. Dr Fliz Katman for their great impact throughout my academic pursuit.

February, 2022

Rita Omali USHIE

# **MEDIA EFFECT ON ELECTORAL OUTCOME IN NIGERIA A STUDY OF 2015 GENERAL ELECTIONS**

## **ABSTRACT**

This study seeks to highlight the important position of the media in shaping electoral process in Nigeria and it aims to show how significant the media is as the “fourth pillar of democracy.” There is no doubt that the media has constantly shaped every dimension of the Nigerian society by exerting a strong influence on how elections are conducted, how electors are mobilized during campaigns, and how political parties seek to publicize themselves. Moreover, as part and parcel of democracy, the media in Nigeria, as happened in other parts of the world, has become an important tool for expressing public opinion as well as providing interaction between various actors of the society in the information age. In light of this, in this dissertation, I aim to provide an explicit understanding of the position of media in Nigeria and the ways in which it influences the electoral outcomes in one of the biggest African nations in the continent by focusing on the 2015 election race.

This study adopts a qualitative case-study approach through which Nigeria is used as the geographical location to understand how media influences elections and campaigns. Moreover, the Nigerian experience is chosen mainly because the level of media interaction in the country has been growing expeditiously over the years. In this dissertation, I specifically investigate the Nigerian 2015 general election, which saw the increased usage of media by the members of the People’s Democratic Party (PDP) as well as the All People’s Congress (APC); main actors that influence the electoral support, mobilize supporters, and in general coordinate electoral policies.

The findings of this study establish that the Nigerian media, to a significant extent, determine the political consciousness of citizens and drive voter turnout. Thus, considered as a primary player in the electoral process because of the content of information transmitted and consumed by the viewer, ultimately, the Nigerian

media determines the voting patterns of the audience, and in this way, I argue, it is very influential in shaping the outcome of the 2015 general election.

**Keyword:** Media, Electoral Outcome, Elections, Voting, Democratic Development, Nigeria.



# **MEDYA'NIN NİJERYA'DA SEÇİM SONUÇLARINA ETKİSİ**

## **2015 GENEL SEÇİMLERİNE İLİŞKİN BİR ARAŞTIRMA**

### **ÖZET**

Bu çalışma Nijerya'da seçim sürecini şekillendirmede medyanın önemli konumunu vurgulamayı ve medyanın demokrasinin “dördüncü ayağı” olarak ne kadar önemli olduğunu göstermeyi amaçlamaktadır. Medyanın seçimlerin nasıl yapıldığı, seçmenlerin kampanyalar sırasında nasıl harekete geçirildiği ve siyasi partilerin kendilerini nasıl tanıtmaya çalıştıkları üzerinde güçlü bir etki uygulayarak Nijerya toplumunun her boyutunu sürekli olarak şekillendirdiği bir gerçektir. Ayrıca, demokrasinin bir parçası olarak, Nijerya'da medya, dünyanın diğer yerlerinde olduğu gibi, bilgi çağında toplumun çeşitli aktörleri arasındaki etkileşimi sağlamanın yanı sıra kamuoyunu ifade etmede önemli bir araç haline gelmiştir. Bunun ışığında, bu tezde, 2015 seçim yarışına odaklanarak, Nijerya'daki medyanın konumu ve kıtanın en büyük Afrika ülkelerinden birinde seçim sonuçlarını nasıl etkilediği hakkında bir izahat sağlamayı hedefliyorum.

Çalışma, medyanın seçimleri ve kampanyaları nasıl etkilediğini anlamak için coğrafi konum olarak Nijerya'nın kullanıldığı nitel bir vaka çalışması yaklaşımını benimsiyor. Ayrıca, Nijerya deneyimi, esas olarak, ülkedeki medya etkileşimi seviyesinin yıllar içinde hızla artması nedeniyle seçilmiştir. Bu tezde özellikle Halkın Demokratik Partisi (PDP) ve Tüm Halk Kongresi (APC) üyeleri tarafından seçim desteğini etkilemek, harekete geçirmek için medya kullanımının arttığını gören Nijerya 2015 genel seçimini özel olarak araştırıyorum.

Bu çalışmanın bulguları, Nijerya medyasının önemli ölçüde vatandaşların siyasi bilincini belirlediğini ve seçmen katılımını yönlendirdiğini ortaya koyuyor. Bu nedenle, izleyici tarafından iletilen ve tüketilen bilgilerin içeriği nedeniyle seçim sürecinde birincil oyuncu olarak kabul edilen Nijerya medyası, nihai olarak izleyicilerin oy verme biçimlerini belirler ve bu şekilde, medyanın 2015 seçim yarışında çok etkili olduğunu iddia ediyorum.

**Anahtar Kelime:** Medya, Seçim Sonuçları, Seçimler, Oylama, Demokratik Kalkınma, Nijerya



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## **ABBREVIATIONS**

- AC** - : Action Congress
- AIT** - : Africa's Independent Television
- APC** - : All Progressive Congress
- ICC** - : International Criminal Court
- INEC** - : Independent National Electoral Commission
- IPC** - : International Press Institute
- NBC** - : National Broadcasting Corporation
- NPC** - : Nigerian Press Council
- NTA** - : Nigerian Television Authority
- PDP** - : Peoples Democratic Party

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## **I. INTRODUCTION**

### **A. Background of the Study**

Over the course of years, media has become an integral part of social life. There is no doubt that media has connected everyone and has transcended the idea of mere communication to influence political reactions. There are numerous ways of using media among which include the spread of information, dissemination of news, promotion of awareness as well as generating mass support. However, despite the numerous positive influences of the media, it has been argued that the result of the 2015 Nigerian general election was to a large extent influenced and shaped by the mass media in a negative fashion (Adedeji, 2015).

The argument concerning the negative influence of media in the Nigerian election for many is based on the misinformation or biased nature of the Nigerian media houses that favor one political actor over the other. In short, I would suggest that the media is accused of “rigging” the election. For this reason, the thesis seeks to discuss the way and manner in which the 2015 Nigerian general election was influenced and shaped by the mass media. It is assumed that the months leading up to elections were filled with propaganda and during this period most of the public were constantly glued to their media devices. Hence, I suggest that the audience was open to manipulation.

As highlighted above, this thesis seeks to explain how the 2015 Nigerian general election was influenced and shaped by the media. In this manner, I focus on the mode of media as well as the discourses and interactions that surface in the election advertisements. Similarly, I also draw attention to the press releases and the nature of propaganda that was employed during this election campaign.

Considering the growing societal importance of the media in educating, informing, and enlightening the populace, Oso (2012, p. 23) characterizes the media as the “fourth pillar of democracy.” Relying on this concept, I would argue that the importance placed on the media stems from the easy dissemination of information

that quickly reaches a wide audience, therefore, controlling and shaping their political as well as societal behavior. Where information is impartially structured and effectively disseminated, we would assume that important events like a democratic election follow a free and egalitarian principle. In this case, it would not be entirely wrong to suggest that the media acts as the fourth pillar of society besides execution, legislation and judication.

In today's globalizing world, the freedom of the media has become one of the significant norms for representative liberal democracy and socio-cultural development. Schramm (1949, p. 399) argues that the state's promotion of political development is ideal, and that the media can play a crucial role in this manner by enlightening the public on democratic and liberal ideals. By contextualizing this argument concerning Nigeria, Pate and Yaraduwa (2015, p. 34) put forward the idea that due to the nature of the uniqueness of the Nigerian population, the mass media in the country serves as the major system or means of political communication, thereby indirectly making them critical stakeholders in any democratic contest. In addition, it is suggested by many scholars that the media serves as a mediator which is not independent of a particular socio-political system but instead provides the channels of communication between components within a regime space. For example, Ekeayumwu (2007, P. 27) highlights that media exists as a tool for information sourcing and dissemination, thereby making this powerful 20<sup>th</sup>-century communication means very important as an instrument for interactive elections, especially in emerging democracies like Nigeria.

In a similar fashion to other countries in the global south that display inclinations towards liberal democratic status, the media has been an important means of information dissemination in Nigeria since the time of independence (usage of radio, telegram, and landlines) till modern times. However, means of mass telecommunication and information have especially acquired significance during what is called the fourth republic of Nigeria. This unique democratic phase started in 1999, which according to Uchenna (2019, P. 2), signifies the beginning of increased media role in government and politics. Especially, the increasing use of modern media sources and the technological format of individualized and non-commercialized mediums on the internet have paved the way for easy access to receiving and spreading of information.

However, this is not to say that the public were deprived of any means of communication and any sorts of sources of information before. In understanding the efficiency of media (new and traditional) in the Nigerian electoral process, it is essential to consider whole the history of the Nigerian elections. As mentioned by Segun (1987, p. 4), the political atmosphere of Nigeria has always been influenced by the media. To exemplify his argument, he provides a historical approach beginning since the missionary publications in 1859. In a similar historical context, Pate and Yaraduwa (2015, p. 35) suggest that journalists in Nigerian were active actors in the struggle to propagate the people's rights to credible electoral processes during the independence movement. Therefore, mass media has always been part and parcel of Nigeria since its founding.

Ideally, the media acts as a mechanism that checks and balances the abuse of governmental power, to propagate different political ideologies during electoral processes. Therefore, I suggest that the media ultimately provides a space for free political voting behavior that is expected from electorates. The Nigerian media sources seem to be fulfilling these roles to a certain extent. They advertise new candidates and political parties to a new voting base, they scrutinize and criticize not just the electoral process itself, but the stakeholders involved in these processes, as a result, they restrain the arbitrariness that some powerholders may be inclined to display.

In my view, it would be apt at this juncture to state that irrespective of the society the media operates in a context in which certain basic factors determine the depth and spread of its influence. These factors include the structural and technological capabilities of media organs themselves, the social and cultural texture of the society they operate in. In countries where the democratic tradition and ideal state-citizen relations are not matured enough, the media might have to be involved in the realms of political, societal and cultural development, nonetheless.

Therefore, for the media to positively impact the political and democratic development of the Nigerian state, it should play certain critical roles including the role of checks and balance by acting as a watchdog against government's arbitrary policies. I would argue that this is precisely what makes it the fourth estate of the realm. In the modern interpretation of the fourth estate of the realm, the media is regarded as the "fourth power" that checks and counterbalances, as suggested above,

the “powers” of the executive, the legislature and the judiciary, through their reportage and exposure of any wrongdoing or misdemeanour made for the public.

However, just like anywhere else, the Nigerian media has repeatedly come under fire for its complacency at different times in rigging and subverting the election processes. I will specifically focus on the criticism levelled against the media in the 4<sup>th</sup> republic in light of this discussion. First, a brief historical context should be given for the reader. The 4<sup>th</sup> republic covers a period between 1999-2003, 2007-2011, and 2015 and the present. In this time interval, accusations and counter-accusations have been levelled in various political processes and the Nigerian media was specifically blamed for falling short of the expected global standards by the civil society, political parties and electoral observers. This criticism is raised by both international and domestic media specialists (Egbala, 2014, p. 395).

In this dissertation, I am directing scholarly attention to this time period because, in 1999, the electoral process that was conducted under the military administration rule raised serious suspicions. In 2003, the elections led to undesired power struggles and controversies. Similarly, the 2007 elections were trailed by deep-seated controversies. On the other hand, during the 2011 electoral processes, there were complaints following the credibility of the whole election process as well. The 2015 general elections were not an exception, thereby rendering all the election results occurred during the 4<sup>th</sup> republic era disputable. And I would suggest that the media played very strategic roles in the failures of these elections through their subjective reportage and in extreme cases through their deployment of hate speech, fake news and outright propaganda.

Based on these empirical findings, which I will elaborate in the following sections, I would argue that all the electoral failures and disputes happened during the 4<sup>th</sup> republic period actually stem from the close economic relations established between the politicians and the Nigerian mass media. This linkage may very well be contextualized from the perspective of media ownership. As suggested in literature, who owns the media has the power to determine the discourses circulating in the society. Therefore, such media patrons possess the capacity to mold the societal behavior; a situation which ultimately might lead to authoritarian tendencies in and through silencing the dissident views and voices. Within the framework of this discussion, Iyengar (1990, P. 12) suggests that the election perceptions are germane

for democracy because they guide political attitudes. The impact of the media is better felt and appreciated in the states with entrenched and viable media organs. In Nigeria too, it may be argued that the media is entrenched however their credibility or viability is still subject to debate because of ownership and control.

I would further argue that the elections in Nigeria over the years is mostly characterized by unprofessional media reportage, hype, frenzy, abuse and in some cases mudslinging. Politicians often dominate the media space with little attention paid on the issues of national development. Usually, political, and ethnic contentions, and nationalist agendas come before the issues of unequal distribution of wealth, social policies, and human rights abuses.

However, I would suggest that the media coverage of elections in parallel to matters of social and economic justices have progressively increased during the 4<sup>th</sup> republic (1999–present), which included the presidency of Olusegun Obasanjo (1999–2007), Umaru Musa Yar’adua (2007), Goodluck Ebele Jonathan (2007–2015) and Muhammadu Buhari (2015-present) respectively. Providing the unlimited opportunities of the 20<sup>th</sup>-century intercommunication technologies to these political leaders has negatively impacted the Nigerian political space with obvious consequences despite the fact that issues of development and matters of social and economic justice have started to occupy the public agendas.

## **B. Statement of the Problem**

This research is therefore formulated according to the paradoxical impacts that the media has left on Nigeria’s electoral process in general with a specific focus on the fourth republic era, which is shortly addressed above. As I suggested, it is common to conclude that the media plays a critical role in the electoral process. This is the sole reason that the media is regarded as the “fourth estate of the realm.” This role is a necessary safeguard in any democratic society, Nigeria is not an exception. Considering the increasing authoritarian tendencies both in the global south and north, I would suggest that the media has become a significant component of the Nigerian democracy more than ever.

The idea that the media is the agent of political mobilization gives us a good reason to research into the effect it has on the electoral process on a conceptual

ground. Based on the literature review research, which I will address in detail in the following chapter, I have come to the conclusion that it is hard to establish the cause-and-effect relationship in the media research since audiences select their specific mediums and sources according to their own political, social and cultural positioning in the society (Kawaljeet, et al., 2018, pp. 531). Therefore, it is a very complicated issue to measure the influence of media or to verify whether the media creates or merely reinforces the political attitudes and behavior. A study by Andra Brichacek, at the University of Oregon School of journalism and communication, explored the usage of the reception theory and demonstrated that, despite the fact the media reinforces certain political behaviors, still the audience acknowledges the material they desire to receive and leave the undesired content out (Brichacek, 2020).

This research attempts to untangle this complexity by identifying the extent to which there is a correlation between media exposure and electoral outcomes. Therefore, I begin my discussion with the presumption that the regardless of the effect of audience reception there is correlation between the media exposure and electoral outcomes. Studies by Iwu, (2008, P. 12), Oluwatosin (2015, P. 2), and many other scholars who investigate the relationship between the media and political behavior in fact verify such an assumption and suggest there is a high degree of voter slide for a candidate who is capable of using the opportunities provided by the media. In this dissertation, I intend to validate this argument by focusing on the Nigeria scenario unfolded during the 4<sup>th</sup> republic. Today as more than ever, majority of citizens mostly rely on the media for information therefore I would argue that it is imperative to unravel the complex operational mechanism of media on electoral behavior.

### **C. Objectives of the Study**

Departing from the very brief literature review discussion I presented above I would suggest the objectives and research questions of this study can be formulated as follows:

To examine the role media played in the 2015 presidential election in light of the concept of “forth realm of the state”

To ascertain the challenges, the media faced during the 2015 election.

To find out how the media can be made to play more effective roles in the upcoming Nigerian elections.

#### **D. Research Questions**

These research objectives are transposed into the exploratory investigation questions below:

What role did the media play in the 2015 presidential election?

What challenges did the media face during the 2015 election?

How can the media be made to play more effective roles in the upcoming elections in the future of Nigeria?

What is the impact of the media on the outcome of the 2015 presidential elections?

#### **E. Significance of the Study**

The modern media is regarded by some scholars to have an astronomical impact on governance and politics. The nature of these effects is however controversial; while some scholars like Ahrend (2001, p. 43), Alali & Eke (1991, p. 32), Egbala, (2014, p. 396), Edegoh, Eze & Ashema (2013, p. 24) argue that their effect on democracy is not profound other scholars such as Bleich (2013, p. 41) point out that the impact of media on politics and the electoral outcome cannot be overlooked, especially in today's information age. In the light of these two diametrically opposing views, this study will investigate to what extent the main media outlets influenced the result of the 2015 Nigerian presidential elections. In this way, it is hoped that the empirical findings, as well as heuristic discussions generated for this dissertation, will make contributions to the literature on media studies and electoral behavior in general.

The significance of this research, therefore, includes capturing the attention of other researchers and scholars who might interpolate the findings obtained from this study to their research as empirical findings. Moreover, from a normative point of view, I hope that the media professionals, managers and owners would draw valid

inferences regarding the importance of media in terms of democracy.

## **F. Scope of the Study**

This research covers one election period that unfolded in Nigeria. This expresses a an historical era wherein Nigerian's fourth experiment with formal democracy can be said to have been consolidated, with four uninterrupted elections and a peaceful transition from an incumbent to an opposition candidate. This time frame was carefully chosen to ensure that the variables under this study can be adequately investigated. Within this temporality, the study covers the following conceptual dimensions: the media, legal framework of the media, the electoral process, empirical review and the theoretical framework.

## **G. Research Methodology**

This study adopts a qualitative design model through which an explicit discussion of the available literature on the role of social media as well as on the Nigerian electoral system is provided with a focus on the Nigerian 2015 general elections. It must be noted that the case study, as a method in and of itself, provides a valid research strategy for empirical inquiry that investigates a phenomenon within a context (Yin 2003). The case study approach is a methodological inquiry in and of itself because it provides a ground wherein the researcher reconstructs the reality in and through his/her visions, ideas and conceptual approaches. As highlighted by Orlikowski and Baroudi (1991, p. 15), the qualitative constructivist perspective allows the informants to "use their own words to draw on their own concepts and experiences." Hence, I would suggest that the study takes on an exploratory constructivist approach by using Nigeria as a case study to provide in-depth knowledge on the media and explain the various ways in which it is being used by the Nigerians during elections.

Methodologically, the case study also provides an opportunity to target a particular topic, thus, relying on the basis of specificity such an approach allows a thorough review and understanding of the targeted topic. Also known as the heuristic inquiry, this methodological approach that I embrace in this dissertation however is supplemented by traditional qualitative inquiry methods derived from social

sciences. In other words, I rely on a positivist understanding while analyzing the empirical data I collected on the case.

To test the empirical data collected on the 4<sup>th</sup> republic period, the study adopts the four-step approach of prepare, explore, specification, and integration, shortly known as PESI. According to Yin (2009, p. 264), the PESI approach is important in analyzing empirical case study research. Additionally, Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2011, p. 43) supports the usage of the PESI four step approach to test studies related with qualitative data as well as literature analysis. Therefore, adopting the PESI approach, the prepare and explore steps are explicitly used in the literature review, whereas, the specification and integration steps are deployed for the case study discussion and data analysis (Rashid, et al., (2019, p. 4).



## **II. AN ANALYSIS OF THE CONCEPT OF MEDIA ON ELECTORAL PROCESS; A LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **A. Introduction**

Media has over the years become an integral part of human life in such a manner that it is integral for livelihood, interaction and communication. Media through its power to easily disseminate information became an important part of the electoral process in many countries with the United States as a typical example showing the early role of media in politics. A historical overview of the role of Media and electoral behaviour in the US explains how a new US president is announced through the media since 1848 (Olson and Koenig, 2020). From this period onward, the media solidified its position as an integral part of the electoral process.

Besides the position of the media in announcing the president of the US, there are many influences on politics caused by the media. It is pertinent to note that the free and liberal nature of the media has created an avenue for easy access to information, hence, people may be easily misinformed if they are faced with the wrong information. Similarly, media as explained by Bimber and Copeland (2011, p. 14) is visible in all electoral processes as well as in politics. For this reason, it could be understood why media campaigns are held by electoral candidates and debates are televised over the media. Additionally, in countries such as Estonia, the internet has become a place where people can vote online, therefore, further increasing the position of the media on political activities.

In Nigeria, the election period is characterized by constant political campaigns from different political parties. Similarly, the supporters of these parties struggle to increase their support base by creating awareness programs and press conferences that are mostly held over the media. Furthermore, every political party strives to attain superiority over the other party and for this reason, they may manipulate the masses in order to increase their number and to weaken the other

political party. This is where the menace of media in the political process is introduced. For this reason, Oparaugo (2021, p. 16) highlights the importance of vetting information acquired over the media as this may influence individual political participation.

The literature review begins by firstly discussing the concept of mass media before analyzing how mass media influences political participation. The latter part of the literature review adopts a case-study centric approach, wherein, the discussion of media influence in politics in Nigeria shall be provided.

## **B. The Concept of Mass Media**

Mass media is a concept that was first introduced at the beginning of the twentieth century to explain the future of the then-emerging new world that was being developed against the backdrop of industrialization and liberal democracy. According to Bagdikian (1997, P. 34), mass media refers to the mediums adopted in communicating with a vast audience, not only through electronic devices but also the institutions that use them to transmit.

Bensch (2014, p. 54) holds that mass media refers to an organized way of communicating and interacting with a large public normally through an electronic facility in a short space of time at a distance. For McQuall (2010, p. 76), mass media has evolved from television and radio to reflect modern technology that has been developed and have taken up what can be considered as an alternative potential network of communication. In this regard, new technologies in mass media mostly involve the internet (social media).

Communication over the media exerts different impacts on its audience, for this reason, Kleinnijeinhus, Hoff, & Atteveldt (2019, p. 661) highlights that mass media influence political belief as well as the general political activity in the country. A similar contribution was made by Bennett and Iyengar (2008, p. 717), who mentioned that the media is an influential tool in the political process. The media as a tool could be used to spread awareness and to mobilize people to vote, and during elections, the media is used as a tool for televising electoral activities.

Additionally, Dilliplane (2014, p. 80) discussed the influence of television as an advertising platform during elections which creates a psychological effect in the minds of the audience.

Following the rise of media houses and news channels, Dubois and Blank (2018, p. 732) mention that some news channels mostly seek to appraise a particular party while negatively targetting another party. In this instance, people who continue to watch or listen to these news channels are bound to develop negative narratives against particular political parties. Similarly, Trilling and Schoenbach (2014, p. 152) mention that partisan election hinders electoral activities, hence, creating a bias in the minds of electorates during the election period. It is pertinent to note that since media is an efficient tool used for the dissemination of information to a wider audience, it is common to find online media sources that are sources of bad publicity for certain parties. In this regard, the mass media becomes a constant tool for influencing the political process.

In modern times, Friedman and Friedman (2008, p. 5) highlights that technological advancement has led to the introduction of the internet, also known as the new media or social media. This form of media in comparison to the previous media channels stimulates an even faster form of news dissemination that is reflected in the Nigerian electoral process.

### **1. New Media (Social Media)**

According to Logan (2010, p. 29), new media refers to “those digital media which are interactive; incorporate two-way communications and involves a type of computing.” New media in today’s world are mostly powered by digital technology, hence, increasing their scale of efficiency and influence over a larger audience. As a comparison to the traditional forms of media, Mustapha, Gbonegun, & Mustapha (2016, p. 130) mention that before the introduction of social media, people depended on mainstream media channels as their only source of information, however, using social media, information could be acquired from anyone and not necessarily a mainstream media channel.

This is based on the premise that new media is accessible to all and can be reached from anywhere in the world. Owing to technological advancements, new media sources are produced in different sizes which are easier to carry around,

therefore, increasing access to information and making way for information to be easily disseminated over a short period of time. In comparison to some traditional media sources which are not produced in digital format or those which are difficult to carry around, new media may be presented in different format which helps for increased flexibility and mobility.

This follows the submission of Owen (2017, p. 44) who mentioned that new media presents an opportunity of receiving information from any channel at any place, thereby, increasing the size of the target audience while expanding the geographical coverage of the information being delivered. Similarly, Van and Peng (2018, p. 84) relates the advent of new media as to mean an increased level of interaction and dissemination of knowledge. This is seen in modern the composition of media in the modern society where people can watch news channels on their phones, communicate over their digital devices, and receive in real time, events happening thousands of miles away from them.

As mentioned by Mainwaring (2011), the introduction of social media has created social dynamics where people can easily interact with each other and build a diverse connection to accessing information, therefore, Owen (2017, p. 46), mentioned that the new media is characterized by various features that create a more dynamic social environment which may sometimes exert negative or positive implications on politics. For Jebril, et al., (2013, p. 115) new media could be traced back to the 1980s when major traditional media outlets became increasingly partisan and were used as a major tool for the spread of propaganda in favour of a particular party. For this reason, Ahmad, Alvi & Ittefaqs (2019, p. 5) produce a strong relationship between media and political participation.

Through the usage of media, various political thoughts and beliefs are easily disseminated. Similarly, this dissemination may contain preferential contents that seek to exalt a political group or party over another. As a result, political bias is formed and individuals may intentionally or unintentionally be coerced into joining political affiliations. Social media is being exploited as a political tool for spreading propaganda, gathering support or for general mobilization.

According to Van and Peng (2018, p. 83) in their discussion of the effects of communication in modern society, social media is seen as an effective communicative tool with the ability to efficiently convince others via the passage of

information. Based on this submission, social media is not only viewed as a means of documenting one's thoughts but it may rather mean an avenue for influencing others through the information being passed across. To support this view, Scharkow and Bachl (2017, p. 332) surveyed the influence of social media on the 2017 Netherlands national election where it was found that social media was used as an effective communicative tool for spreading ideas and beliefs about various people.

As mentioned by Kleinnijehus, et al., (2007, p. 372) voters are widely influenced by the various posts that they may encounter when using the internet during the voting period. Since social media has assumed a position as one of the most common means of communication, it has attracted users from different political affiliations who can easily access the internet and communicate their views.

As the population of media users increases, so does the communication and interaction increase. For this reason, Kleinnijehus, Hoof and Atteveldt (2019, p. 664) mention that during the election period, voters are usually attracted to the party that is most trending on the internet or those that they often hear about. This could also be called the bandwagon effect as it creates support for a party, mainly because the party seems to be very popular.

The role of the media as a tool for information and development has transcended into a tool for political activities. The political nature of mass media is very encompassing since many people are reliant on it for information and awareness. For this reason, in regions such as Nigeria where there is increased usage of media, it is common for fake news and propaganda to be widely spread. Also, as mentioned by Oyesomi, Oyero, & Okorie (2014, p. 262), there is a high possibility for rumours to spread faster in areas of high media usage, in comparison to the areas of low media usage. This, therefore, shows that there are both negative and positive effects of the media.

In discussing the positive aspect of the media in terms of politics, Weare (2002, p. 674) highlights that political participation is increased as a result of activities conducted over the media. In this regard, the elements regarding political participation that we must consider include the right to free expression, political mobilization, group coordination, and efficient political organization. In some regions such as the US, the media is used when counting and announcing the votes for the general election. Additionally, in places such as Estonia, the e-voting system

has been introduced, further, solidifying the increased usefulness of the media.

It is pertinent to note that political participation is also dependent on the democratic levels of the country. For this reason, Shirky (2011, p. 4) discusses that non-democratic or autocratic leaders look for ways to reduce their citizens' access to media services as a control measure. Similarly, Best and Wade (2009, p. 263) posit that a clamp-down on media services is mostly influenced in undemocratic communities as a means of reducing political participation which in turn reflect on the poor level of human rights in these regions.

Another important positive influence of media in politics is provided by Jaspal and Marco wherein the importance of media in increasing the level of minority identity was discussed (Jaspal and Marco, 2010, p. 304). In multiethnic areas, the minority groups sometimes face assimilation or even discrimination, however, the usage of media, especially new media has provided an avenue for members of such groups to demand their rights while seeking domestic and global recognition. A typical example is the Biafra nation in Nigeria who has been faced with marginalization from the Nigerian state since independence in 1960, and this has caused them to demand their own country. To increase their recognition and demand international support for a new state formation, they created the Biafra radio as well as the Biafran website, through which they constantly pass their message (Omaka, 2018, p. 563).

Qvortrup (2006, p. 349) mentions media to be an effective political tool in the area of developing a civil society. Civil society is needed in all countries and it is often regarded that the higher the influence of civil society, the higher the level of democracy. Civil society is essential for state and nation-building, as well as for citizenship development and protection, hence, with a mass communicative tool available, people can easily share information and share ideas that influence the growth of civil society in a country.

Similar to the building of civil society, Di Gennaro and Dutton (2006, p. 305) mention that the usage of media has helped in organizing different voices to make a single demand or in mobilization for protest and peaceful walks. Protests, especially in undemocratic regions are mostly conducted using social media, therefore, gathering support and increased participation from fellow citizens. In the absence of media, it would be impossible to organize protests and to reach a particular goal.

As a contrast to the positive effects of media on politics, Bimber (2003, p. 56) highlights that there are numerous negative implications on political participation that has been caused as a result of media, a major reason is propaganda. Propaganda is usually misinformation, false information or limited information that is spread to distort the original meaning of an event. Hence, to gain higher followers, the media may be used as an efficient tool for the spread of propaganda.

Similarly, Shah, et al., (2002, p. 359) posits that media is irrelevant in politics as it creates very little resolve to real-world problems. In this regard, social media is only used as a tool for words without action, hence, it should not be considered seriously. In support of this, Calder (2013, p. 33) suggested that it is pertinent to accept media as a tool for political disturbance, rather than one for political growth and increased participation. This could be related to the various political protest and civil unrest that occurred due to the usage of media for publicity purposes.

For Papagiannidis and Manika (2016, p. 12), the general and universalised nature of media has created a tumultuous experience for political participation since it allows anyone, irrespective of their age, political knowledge, education level, and cultural affiliation to spread their ideas. For this reason, people are easily exposed to a wide range of ideas on a single topic, therefore, causing confusion and further debate, instead of a resolution.

The Nigeria media is a mixture of both positive and negative effects on politics, for this reason, the next section discusses in detail the influence of media on politics in Nigeria.

### **C. The Influence of Media on Political Participation in Nigeria**

As mentioned by Oyesomi, Oyero, & Okorie (2016, p. 264), media exerts a significant presence in the manner in which politics is conducted in Nigeria. Similarly, as highlighted by Baran and Davis (2011, p. 78), media allows for easy participation in political activities without any restriction, limitation or deterrence, therefore, this has led to a greater number of Nigerians continuously participating in the country's political processes.

Nigeria boasts of over 210 million persons with over 70 per cent being politically involved, therefore, the media introduces the opportunity for these persons to participate in a functioning democracy (Worldometer, 2021).

The role of Media in Nigerian politics as mentioned by Mustapha, Ahmad & Abubakar (2014, p. 132) is like a public marketplace where various ideas are developed, contested, articulated, and debated. In such a situation, it becomes easy for persons to form an alliance, mobilize and compete for more followers over various media sources. This led Adedeji (2015, p. 7) during the 2015 general elections to mention that the media has indeed created a highly democratic society in Nigeria by allowing both synchronous and asynchronous interactions and serving as a platform for collective action in the country.

The prominence of Media in Nigeria has continued to rise, especially considering the increased level of interaction and communication that is being established by the electorates and the constituent in real-time. This has further led to the increased number of political office holders as well as political institutions to open accounts on social media and other interactive platforms. Additionally, Akinlade (2016, p. 43) suggests that the use of media has significantly reduced the geographical differences between the rulers and the ruled, and this has also increased general political participation amongst citizens.

As mentioned by Mustapha, Gbonegun, & Mustapha (2016, p. 131), the media's effect on politics in Nigeria has created a two-way communication route and has created an increased form of mobilization of political followers, either for voting purposes, awareness, or just to increase followership. Concerning mobilization over the media, Kirk and Schill (2011, p. 311) highlight the problematic nature of this action, especially if false information is widely dispersed over the media. For this reason, an understanding of the functional and dysfunctional role of media in Nigerian politics is provided.

As mentioned by Falade (2015, p. 19), the influence of media on Nigerian politics is explicitly dependent on the users of such media channels, the majority of which are youths or people with no prior political knowledge. Hence, the possibility of spreading false news is high with very little means of verification. In support of this view, Borge and Cardenal (2010) express their concerns about the dysfunctional nature of media on politics which may create an opportunity for rumours to be

regarded as real news or increase the propensity for propaganda to gain higher support.

For Issa (2016, p. 22), media was a very efficient tool for the creation of awareness in Nigeria, especially during the 2015 general elections as this was a time with heightened concern about the missing schoolgirls and increased activities of Boko Haram. Additionally, the 2019 general elections also introduced the usage of media, however, is a minimal proportion when compared to the year 2015. The situation of media in the Nigerian political process is also extremely dependent on various factors such as social, religious, tribal, and cultural factors.

Due to its population size and as a result of the multiple ethnic affiliations in the country, the media arrangement in Nigeria is usually formed on sectarian lines, with various sects scrambling for power and publishing content that will tarnish the image of the other sect. It is in this light that Nnanyelugo and Nwafor (2013, p. 31) discusses the influence of political godfathers in sponsoring their selfish or personal aims using media in causing division in the Nigerian media space. It is common to find local newspaper publishing contents that are aimed at providing bad publicity to the opposite sect or ethnic tribes.

Focusing on the position of media usage in the Eastern part of Nigeria, Chinedu-Okeke & Obi (2016, p. 12) mention that although the major aim of media participation in this part is directed towards sections and to achieve the Biafra state, the second most influential reasons for political participation is to destabilize the Northerners, whom the Easterners believed were the major cause of the Biafran war. It must be noted that the Eastern part of Nigeria is predominantly Igbos, a tribe that is seeking its state known as the Biafran State. As a result of the increased level of corruption of the new Nigerian state and the marginalization of the Igbos by the Northerners, the Biafran war occurred in 1966 for three years to provide the Biafran state for the Eastern people (Omaka, 2018, p. 556 ).

Based on the Biafran example mentioned above, the dysfunctional use of the media in politics is seen as it only seeks to provide bias information against the Nigerian government. This has led to a form of creating an agenda that is mostly aimed to fulfil a particular need or to influence the nature in which information is assimilated by users of the media. This concept is otherwise known as the agenda-setting theory.

As mentioned by Oluwatosin, et al., (2020, p. 16) the position of the media in Nigeria has increased the propensity for political office holders as well as political parties to disseminate their propaganda, lies, and vices to gain the support of the masses. This has led Haddon (2015, p. 7) to understand that, the relationship between the media and politics is borne out of the political affiliation and personality of the transmitter or of the originator of the message to be transmitted. The agenda-setting theory comes in different forms according to the agenda to be created, therefore, Olayiwola (2014, p. 16) mentioned that when the media shows an element of one-sided politics, it is usually to set an agenda in favour of a side against the other(s).

The major media houses in Nigeria as well as the social media has over the years come under strict supervision by the government, therefore, it has provided a flexible means for the government in establishing their propaganda and in setting theories in hopes that this will be accepted by the general public. Additionally, the recent End-Sars Campaign that was held across Nigeria in 2020 where scores were killed by the Nigeria Army was met with a counter-argument by the government that non was killed, hence, leading to the temporary Twitter ban and media intimidation by the government (Edet, 2021). The government had hoped if the liberal nature of Twitter was curtailed, they can then enforce their agenda by creating an explosive campaign that none was killed during the End-Sars protest.

In line with this, the next section of the literature review discusses the theoretical framework of the study which is the Agenda-Setting Theory.

#### **D. Agenda Setting Theory: Theoretical Framework**

This theory is seen as the news media's ability to influence the attention of the public on a variety of issues. The agenda-setting theory is a social science theory that attempts to make predictions and to discuss in clearer terms, why the media is used in the way that it is being used, especially in a political context. In other words, if a news item is reported frequently and conspicuously, the audience will think the issue is more important.

McCombs & Shaw formally tested the agenda-setting theory in a study of the 1968 US presidential election. In their 1968 Chapel Hill Study, McCombs & Shaw showed the direct link between the most important election issues considered by the

100 residents of Chapel Hill, North Carolina, and the top issues reported by the local and national news media.

McCombs and Shaw (1972) were able to determine the extent to which the media determines public opinion by comparing important issues in news content with public opinion on the most important electoral issues. Since the quarterly review was published in the 1972 issue of *Public Opinions* in 1968, more than 400 studies have been published on media scheduling, and this theory is still considered valid. Research shows that in some countries what the media choose to disclose is linked to their views on political, economic and cultural issues. Countries with more political power are more likely to receive media coverage.

Some key factors such as financial resources, technology, foreign trade, and military spending may be the main factors explaining inequality in broadcasting. The history of programming can be traced back to the first episode of *Public Opinion* published by Walter Lippmann in 1922. In this section, words are in our hearts and pictures are in our hearts; Lippman believes that the media is the link between world events and the image in the public's mind. Walter Lippmann did not use the term "agenda-setting", but instead coined what we now call "agenda-setting". After Lippman, Bernard Cohen wrote in 1963: "The media usually don't know how to tell people what to think, but they are surprisingly good at telling readers how their thoughts should be".

Different people will view the world under different lenses and this is plausible due to our individual experiences, "it depends on the map they are reading by the authors, editors and publishers of the papers they are reading," Cohen said. In the early 1960s, Cohen clarified the ideas that later led McCombs & Shaw to formalize the agenda-setting theory. The most influential stories of agenda-setting often involve politics, conflict, terrorism, and crime.

The main idea and statement of the principles of the agenda are to create awareness and concern for critical issues through the media. Similarly, scheduling describes how the media is trying to influence viewers, and establishing a system for disseminating news. However, it is pertinent to note that agendas are primarily spread through the media since the media can be filtered or censored to reflect the personal needs of the advertiser, hence, the general public is directed to focus on the topic that the advertiser wishes for them to focus on.

These critical statements were established by measuring changes in salience using surveys with the presence of additional news regularly. One of the most important considerations on the subject of social media planning is the timing of this issue. In addition, different media can set different agendas. From a design standpoint, the study of the relationship between traditional media and new digital spaces has seen progress.

## **1. The Nigerian Media and Agenda Setting**

The media decides to a great extent what to cover in their programming and what issues or talking items to include (Ahrend, 2001). A presidential candidate representing any of the numerous smaller parties could easily argue that his/her unsuccessful election campaign was due to the lack of mainstream broadcast media coverage. In a multi-party country such as Nigeria, there are numerous small political parties with very minimum media coverage, hence, it reduces their chances to gain support and win seats. This shows how important the media is to emerge successful in any election in Nigeria. The media is not only used for winning political positions but may also be used for agenda setting (Adedeji, 2015).

The complexity of leadership that is consistent with the national development agenda continues to be controversial because leadership has different translations (Magnus and Huston, 2012). The economic development speed of each entity is determined by the intrinsic nature of leadership and governance. In an interview with the Daily Trust, Professor Kayode Makinde complained about the development problems faced by the Nigerian country and pointed out that the main reason was the leadership of governments at all levels.

I suggest that in understanding his position, we realize that management hindered development due to poor leadership. Therefore, due to the sluggish environment, the economy is bleeding heavily and the intelligence is exhausted. Professor Kayode Makinde's views on leadership coincide with Achebe's (1983) lament in his book "The Nigerian Problem". Nigeria, a country with abundant human and natural resources (including oil wealth), is fed up with seemingly difficult socio-economic and political challenges. Chinua Achebe said that Nigeria's problem is simply and directly the failure of the leadership.

Achebe (1983) goes on further to assert that there is nothing wrong with the Nigerian character, there is nothing wrong with the Nigerian land or water or anything else. The problem with Nigeria is simply a failure of leadership. The Nigerian problem is the unwillingness or inability of its leaders to rise to the responsibility and the challenge of personal example which is the hallmark of true leadership.

Consistent with Achebe (1983), most Nigerians agree with all the problems that Nigeria is facing today, including the inability to restructure its structure of “feeding bottle federalism” according to Ike Ekweremadu (Deputy Senate President in the ninth Senate) description of our federal system, are traceable to leadership without a moral purpose. It has also been agreed the media has not lived up to its professional calling in being unbiased when calling these failed leaders out because of sundry factors among them is the ownership, religion, ethnicity, corruption, lack of investigative journalism and professionalism.

The agenda-setting theory is adopted to anchor this study because of its direct link with the topic; one of the key themes of the theory is the ability of the media to influence the importance placed on topics of public agenda, in this case, elections. Another key theme of the theory is its emphasis on the creation of public awareness and concern of salient issues by news media which in this case is politics; it must be noted in the superstructure, in a developing state like Nigeria this superstructure called politics determines all other structures such as the economy and socio-cultural.

The third key theme of the theory is accessibility; this means that the more an issue is covered by the media, the more it will resonate with the public. In Nigeria the media ownership forces this accessibility hence the choice of the agenda-setting theory for this study. There is also a direct link between the theory and policymakers specifically through the theories focus on the agenda building process, the electoral process determines who becomes a policymaker. The media creates and frames political issues giving them relevance; the media also links these salient issues it raises to other pertinent issues they may not have raised.

If according to the theory the media can shape opinion, it, therefore, means the media to a large extent determines the electoral voting pattern.

The media tells its captive audience how and what to think, giving that fourth estate of the realm the capacity to persuade public opinion, this makes the theory very relevant and timely for what this study seeks to highlight.

## **E. Conclusion**

The media has grown to become a very influential part of modern human life. The influence of the media transcends from being a mere means of communication to exert political influence in various countries. The media has made the dissemination of information extremely easy and has increased citizens participation in politics. The traditional concept of media, which reflected mainstream media has been immensely substituted by the usage of new media, otherwise known as social media. Through the usage of social media, individuals are granted the opportunity to receive news and spread ideas anywhere at any time.

The availability of social media, as well as contemporary media, has increased citizen participation in politics and this has further influenced the electoral outcome in various countries across the world. The literature review focuses on the Nigerian situation where it was discussed that due to the usage of media, the Nigerian electorates can mobilize support, spread propaganda, set agenda, and make changes to the electoral outcome. This is based on the premise that the media is a useful tool in spreading information to a large audience.

Additionally, the study discusses the theoretical framework which is centred on the agenda-setting theory. Agenda setting allows for the usage of media to promote the interest of one person or group to be widely believed by the masses. This explains why politicians and public figures constantly use the media to support their claims and to gather support for their political activities. This situation is the same in Nigeria, where political parties are in an endless war of fighting for support from the citizens. Hence, they continually use the media as a tool to gather support for themselves or to negatively advertise the opposition.

### **III. THE NIGERIAN MEDIA AND ITS INFLUENCE ON THE NIGERIAN ELECTORAL SYSTEM**

#### **A. Introduction**

The position of media in Nigeria is reflected in numerous ways and this has also influenced the nature of the Nigerian electoral system. Media has developed over the years as just a means for information to reflect the nature of democracy and political participation in a country. For a nation such as Nigeria, there is an increased level of political participation from the citizens, the majority of which submit their views and ideas over various media channels, hence, increasing the importance of media in Nigeria.

The 2015 general elections in Nigeria was faced with higher media participation, especially from the citizens. Additionally, being faced with heightened security challenges as well as economic troubles, the media served as an effective tool wherein supporters of various political parties mobilized themselves and campaigned for their intended political contestants. Similarly, owing to the increased use of social media in Nigeria, the 2015 election was one of the most highly anticipated elections in the country, therefore, attracting different views of citizens over the media.

This chapter begins by firstly discussing the nature of the Nigerian electoral system before moving to explain in detail the nature of the Nigerian media system. It also highlights some important legislation guiding media and explains in detail how media continues to shape Nigerian politics.

#### **B. The Nigerian Electoral System**

As discussed in the previous chapter, the nature of media on politics is determined by the level of democracy that is practised by the state. Moreso, the level of democracy for a nation rests on many factors which include; the voting models, as well as the processes in achieving a free and fair election. For Iwu (2008, P. 12), an

electoral system is a set of guidelines used to determine how elections and referenda or other issues will be voted on. It contains a set of guidelines governing all areas of the voting process: during the election, who can vote, who is the candidate, how to mark or cast votes, how to calculate votes, the upper limit of the campaign budget, and such related factors can affect the election results.

In Nigeria, constitutions, statutes, precedents and electoral laws define political electoral systems, they are normally conducted by statutory electoral umpires in the form of an institution and can use different models of elections for different offices (Jinadu, 2011). Sisk (2008) highlights 6 major types of electoral systems which are; Indirect elections, majoritarian systems, hybrid systems, multiplicity systems, primary elections, and proportional systems. The Nigerian state practices the majoritarian system where the leader with the highest vote takes the seat.

In this regard, every leader tries to gain the highest vote by campaigning massively over the media as well as mobilization their followers to campaign for them. This has led to an increased significance of media on the Nigerian electoral process.

### **C. The Influence of the Nigerian Media on the Nigerian Electoral Process**

The Nigerian media evolved because of the need to inform, enlighten, educate and entertain the people. The pioneer media platform was a native language print publication set up in 1859 by a Yoruba dialect media outfit that was pioneered by the British Reverend Henry Townsend. The newspaper was religious because it had its foundation in the then Church Mission Society (Olumuyiwa, 1988).

The 1920s was the pioneering era of Nigerian media because the new crop of elites in Nigeria at that time felt the need to rally and mobilize the people against colonial rule and this desire led public figures and politicians like Herbert Macaulay, Henry Carr, Adeyemo Alakija to use the media in pursuit of this political goal. They established Lagos Daily News, the first indigenous daily in British west Africa owned by Herbert Macaulay and John Akilade Caulcrick. This print publication started operations fully under this new leadership in 1927 (Segun, 1987). The newspaper advocated nationalism; it later rechristened its name to Nigeria Daily

News. The name change was in line with its objective to spread its coverage and reading audience. Another notable tabloid during this era was the Daily Times, established in 1925 by Adeyemo Alakija and Richard Barrow, however, this tabloid was only an extension of the British Mirror Group Media.

The Nigerian media faced some turbulent years during this epoch. There was a lot of unrest in the sector, however, it did not stop the growing and expanding media industry. Some of the tabloids and broadcast stations that started operations during this period include West African Pilot (1937), the Lagos Daily service, the Nigerian Tribune, the Daily sketch, Gaskiya ta fi Kwabo (1939), the Western Nigeria Broadcasting Service (1959) among others (Nzenbe, 1992).

In contrast to the early 1900s, the 1960s recorded a very political approach towards media activities in the country. As mentioned by Olumuyiwa (1988), this could be as a result of the Nigerian independence that occurred in 1960 as well the spontaneous growth of numerous media moguls such as Ernest Ikoli, Anthony Enuahoro, Lataf Jakande, and Bisi Onabanjo. Similarly, the young nation witnessed the 1966 coup attempt which further increased political activism over the media. However, owing to the coup, the military government introduced numerous anti-liberal media decrees to reduce the access of people to media.

The return of democracy in 1979 saw the removal of the restrictions on the media generally, therefore, Nzenbe, (1992) argues that the era witnessed the onboarding of print houses like the Guardian in 1983 and the birth of Vanguard daily Newspaper and Newswatch weekly News Magazine. However, the country faced another military takeover due to the increased level of corruption by the Shagari government.

The 1990's witnessed the emergence of weekly news outlets such as Tell Magazine, the News and Tempo. This state of things according to Oluwatosin (2010) went on unabated until the opening up of the media space and loosening of restrictions with the promulgation of Decree 32 of 1992, which made it possible for broadcast platforms like Ray power Radio, African Independent Television, Minaj Systems Radio, Minaj Broadcasting International, Clapperboard Television, Degue Broadcast Network (DBN), Channels News and Silver-bird Television to begin broadcasting.

The year 1999 saw the return of democracy and the lifting of media censoring. This period ushered in the era of multiple media platforms as every politician saw a need to establish a media outfit to propagate personal political views. Prominent news outfits that emerged in this regard include Daily Trust (which started as a weekly paper in 1998 but became a Daily in 2001), The Sun, The Nation, Leadership etc.

Since the introduction of the new media in the early 2000s, the broadcast media space has witnessed a big change along with its attendant consequences. This new epoch is seen to be dynamic, revolutionary, proactive and even disruptive as Owuamalam (2014) argues. The digital landscape has drastically changed how the public access news, share news, shape opinions and set agendas.

This visibility and authority of the traditional media have reduced as new channels of news have emerged online. They are considered to be more vibrant, more investigative and inquisitive by leveraging the opportunity offered by the internet and associated technologies or platforms that are capable of reaching out to a larger public (Balmas & Sheaffer, 2010). The specialist blogs were the first that sought to inform, enlighten and entertain the Nigerians; pioneer examples include Elomobah com, Sahara Reporters among others (Owuamalam, 2014).

Due to its appeal to groups and communities, Oremus (2017) highlights that the new media gained traction and was widely used in Nigerian society. Additionally, the increase in the use of new media was a result of the liberal nature with which it operates, which was a contrast to the traditional media channels that were usually under government control. From the view of Benesch (2014) today's public are not interested in the channel used, they are more interested in how convenient it is, whether it is just in time, just for them and ease of access.

Bartlett, et al., (2015) investigate the uses of social media for election communication in the United States which can also be used in understanding the effectiveness of social media during the 2015 general election in Nigeria. The researchers collected Tweets and Facebook posts, using English language search terms, wherein it was found that there was an increased interaction between supporters of the Republican party as well as those of the democratic party. Similarly, the Nigerian media environment during the 2015 general election showed an increased interaction between those supporting the Peoples Democratic Party

(PDP) as well as those supporting the All Progressive Congress (APC).

Judging from the usage of new media in the Nigerian 2015 general elections, we can understand the increasing use of social media outlets as against traditional media in the contemporary era and how the Nigerian political landscape is changing to conform to the increased use of new media outlets in comparison to traditional media. There is a significant level and rate of social media usage among the younger and more educated Nigerians than the older and less educated which has led to an increased level of interaction considering the growing number of the younger population in Nigeria (2021).

Owing to the pivotal nature played by media in elections around the globe, it is important to understand how regulation works in the media world. As highlighted previous, media may be used for propaganda or to spread false information, hence, some regulations have been set in place to ensure that every user of the media, both new and old are respected and are acting according to the acceptable societal standards, especially during the electoral process.

#### **D. Media Regulations During Electoral Process**

##### **1. Legal principles on the use of the media in the electoral process**

Expanding national and international laws regulate the role of the media in general elections which seeks to ensure fair usage of the media during electoral processes. The basic principles stipulated in international law are aimed at regulating government actions against media clampdown rather than a regulation of the media industry. These international principles include the individual right to freedom of speech and information rights, as well as the individual right to participate in the national government during an election cycle (Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948, Article. 19). These principles are contained in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the United Nations in 1948. Based on the provisions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, numerous regional courts have adopted their judicial principles to reflect similar media freedom that is aimed against the government shutdown of local media activities. This is borne out of the general acceptance that free media means a stable democracy for citizens.

Broad sources of international law regarding media and elections can be found in the decisions of other types of international institutions. For example, in 1999, the United Nations (UN) Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression established specific guidelines for the role of the media in elections and the government's responsibility to ensure media diversity. The practices of the United Nations administration and other international organizations in the international supervision of elections also provide the true source of "soft law."

In my view, this means that the law is not binding on the member states of the United Nations, but it is an important indicator of the application of international standards. It can also provide a framework for national legislation, media activities and related regulatory agencies.

The media and elections involve some basic and interrelated human rights which are bestowed on voters, candidates and the media which as mentioned above are supported by many international and regional judicial provisions. However, to ensure that citizens can go on with their voting duties without fear or intimidation, two key principles outline a healthy election process, these are; transparency and confidentiality.

Transparency signifies election monitoring agencies and their supporting subsidiaries, or in the Nigerian case, Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), police, etc. This means that all businesses of its sister organizations are subject to public scrutiny and therefore bear responsibility. Confidentiality signifies that the security of election monitoring agencies is protected to prevent those who do not have the right to receive unauthorized information and may jeopardize the integrity of the election process. Confidentiality provides support for the citizens who are headed to the polls while transparency ensures that the votes cast are all counted during the electoral process.

In situations where neither of these principles is met during the election, it is common to find voters debating over media channels on the flawed system of the electoral process. This happened during the Nigeria 2015 elections where some local constituencies could not have their votes counted as well as in Istanbul, Turkey during the 2019 governorship elections (Kasapoglu, 2019).

Having mentioned international regulating principles as well as regional provisions towards the media, the next section focuses on the regulating policies of the Nigerian state on media and elections.

There are numerous provisions aimed at regulating the position of media and the electoral process in Nigeria. Some of these provisions are highlighted under the Nigerian Penal Code, the Nigerian Press Council Act, the National Broadcasting Commission Act, the Obscene Publications Act, the Electoral Act, the Printing Press Act, and other bills passed by the Nigerian legislative to regulate citizen interaction over the media and electoral process.

The laws regarding the press all mentioned the independent nature of the Nigerian press and highlights them to be free of political affiliation as well as political intimidation. Similarly, the laws on the Nigerian press describe the Nigerian media as reliable and accessible to all. In the same manner, the laws on elections highlight the behaviour expected of the voter during the electoral process and it establishes the liberal nature of the Nigerian electoral process.

## **E. Media and Elections**

### **1. The Role of the Media in Political Change**

The first way the media is involved in elections is by selecting which political parties and or candidates to cover and how much airtime is given to them, those choices contribute or influence voter perception. The preferred supported candidate may continue to receive positive publicity through all media platforms, while the candidate which is least preferred usually faces a growing level of negative publicity. All these may influence voter perception and exert a strong influence on the political outcome. According to Lawrence (2015), the key variable that drives elections is the electoral perception and awareness regarding the name of candidates as well as the ideological affiliation of the political party.

In Nigeria, the nature of political affiliation is based on multiple factors such as political ideology, economic policies, cultural affiliation as well as societal popularity. As mentioned by Hardt (2003) and Bleich (2003), the media users may also introduce media bias as a means of supporting one political aspirant over the other. This explains why most media outlets for conventional media channels air

what garners emotional response or favourable bias during elections. This bias may be a result of the factors listed above. In the words of Lawrence (2015, p. 45)

*“We know there’s a link between selective exposure and the growing schism in political behavior. And that lacuna is evidently connected to the rise of more partisan media sources. Apart from ideological subjectivity journalists across board also propagate biased views by changing complex campaigns and issues into simplified scripts”.*

One of the popular scenes in election reports is the story of “horse racing” or “game frame”. “We have learned from years of research by other scholars such as Finn (1997) that mainstream media tends to view elections through a competitive lens. The elections of political parties and their candidates are reported like a sporting event, overemphasizing who wins, who loses, who reaches the top, who falls, and candidates’ progress or lagging in opinion polls.

In Nigeria, ahead of the 2011 general election, Dr Goodluck Jonathan’s script was based on his famous slogan “I had no shoes”, which the media compared to grass and grace through humility and hard work, in the 2015 general election Dr Goodluck Jonathan received negative publicity from the media, while the script for General Buhari was a religious fanatic, a stubborn fundamentalist and regionalist.

However, in regards to the horse racing theory, both aspirants (Goodluck Jonathan, and General Buhari) were seen as ill-fitted for the job, however, since Jonathan was the predecessor, the media tried to announce Buhari as the winner of the election even before all votes were counted. Conventional media outlets, as well as social media, clamoured for a change of government and while counting was underway, General Buhari was already being announced as the winner of the presidential election, especially by media houses in the North.

Another way of realizing how media influences election is by looking at the importance of media, especially social media in current times. As mentioned by Obono (2016, p. 51), it is shown that 42% of electorates get their news through modern social apps on their phones. It is pertinent to note that the news seen on these platforms is heavily filtered. What is seen on these social media platforms are usually propelled by algorithms that determine what is seen relying on what the viewer likes and or dislikes, what you comment on and click on. According to Dunaway (2015),

who researches about impact of social media in politics, He was of the view that social media did not help electorates in getting different views and opinions that contribute to open political debate.

Similarly, another role of media in an election is its influence on the electoral process through visuals. For many people, visual displays carry a more profound impact than printed words. Mcquall (2010) who is one of many astute visual communicators of our time, in his study showed that images and photo representation, particularly of political candidates or their parties, conveniently embody and or carry emotions, actions, realism, feelings and credibility. These visual outputs imprint themselves in the minds of the voting public. What the media choose to broadcast or print with factors such as size, colour, time, page and layout can also influence voter perceptions and reveal possible bias. These images also become part of the permanent record preserved on different media platforms such as print, broadcast and the internet.

The final role of media in the election as discussed in this thesis is caused by publication bias wherein the social media user or the editor of the conventional media channel aims to spread propaganda to either favour or diminish the chances of a political aspirant. Journalists may seem like impartial observers who only report, but they are often restricted by what and when they report specific hot or hot political issues. The entire broadcast media is now analysis and opinions, rather than direct news that can be easily found through Internet searches. Suppose, if the owner of a broadcasting media has a financial interest in a certain political party, then the negative news reports of that political party will probably not appear. Typical examples abound in Nigeria e.g., Channels Television, TVC News, and Liberty Radio are all affiliated with the All Progressive Congress, while Africa's Independent Television (AIT), and Ray Power are affiliated with PDP. The government station, National Television Authority (NTA), is affiliated with any party in power.

Based on the numerous roles of media in the electoral process, there are some major impacts that these roles have created on the electoral outcome. The impacts are discussed in the next section

## **2. Media Impacts on Electoral Outcome**

The media exerts a strong impact on electoral outcomes by using political advertising. As mentioned by Olatunji (2010), the advertising sub-sector is influenced by institutions within the micro and macro-political, economic, social and technological ecology, therefore, the media may be used to set an agenda regarding politics in a state. It is no doubt that advertising messages about political candidates and political parties are usually transmitted to the targeted audiences through different broadcast media available at any particular time, this could either be mainstream or mass media. Therefore, to ensure that a political aspirant gains a higher advantage over the other, the media may be explored as a tool to influence electoral outcomes.

On his part, Oso (2012) understandably argues that political advertising has over the years, become an important tool in the hands of the political class to create awareness about candidates or political parties before, during and after elections to influence the electorates to support, accept, reject, or have a change of attitude towards or against a particular political party or its opponents. In support, Nash (1994) posits that there can be no role for political advertising better than using it to show how one politician or political party is different from (or better than) another. Similarly, Olatunji and Akinjoyibia (2011) highlight that political advertising is centred on creating awareness or mobilizing support, hence, this is different from political communication which only seeks to enhance the exchange of ideas between politicians and their target public.

Therefore, it is understood that, while political communications are often a two-way process, political advertising is more propagandist and one-sided in nature. It must be noted that the advertising institution is a critical socializing agent for educating, informing, entertaining and inducing a change in voters' behaviour regarding the choice of candidates at elections. Finn (1999) argued that although political advertising may not ensure victory for a politician, it influences voters' opinions on the perception they have about the candidate.

A political advertisement may be divided into negative and positive political advertisement as suggested by Gusfield (1981). Positive political advertising seeks to display a candidate or his political party and ideologies to the electorates, by utilizing decent language (Positive tone) and shunning messages that are inciting, promoting

ethnicity, religious or other terms of cleavages in society, it also relies on logical appeal. On the other hand, negative political advertising may be delivered in form of an attack form of political advertising (Obono, 2016, p. 61).

As mentioned by Doulker and Kotzaivazoylous (2007), negative advertising may firstly appeal to the majority of electorates, however, this may create a problem for the political candidate who may then want to positively project his or her image after using negative advertising on the opponent. This means that a candidate may involve a form of negative advertising on its opponent as a means of spoiling the opponent's image, the electorates then channel a higher form of attention to the opponent than on the advertizing candidate. Therefore, any form of positive advertising from the advertising candidate is only overpowered by increased attention on the opposition.

Through the usage of negative advertising, a political aspirant continually injects materials and contents that will tarnish the image of the other political aspirant, therefore, limiting the chances of the contender to win an election. This is based on the belief that most persons would believe what is presented to them on the media without conducting prior checks or verification. Therefore, the higher the negative advertising conducted against a person over the media, the lower their chances of winning an election. However, negative advertising also creates publicity for a political aspirant, hence, a victim of negative advertisment may use this in their favor to increase their political standing and to gather their audience.

A typical example of this was the US election between Hilary Clinton and Donald Trump, while the democratic party continued to negatively advertise Trump to the American people, Trump gained more attention in the media as compared to Clinton, therefore, creating higher support for Trump in the USA. For this reason, Barnad and Kreiss (2013) suggest that there is a need for politicians to strike a balance between both negative and positive advertising.

The Nigerian situation regarding political advertising as mentioned by Onwuamalam (2014) is mostly channelled towards the analysis of mainstream media, particularly newspaper and television advertisements during elections. Political candidates to influence electoral behaviour continue to use the mainstream media as a pawn in tarnishing the image of their opponents while positively showcasing their images (Edegoh, Ezebuenyi, & Ashema, 2013).

During the 2015 election campaign in Nigeria, it was common to see newspapers depicting the APC presidential candidate (General Muhammadu Buhari) as a cartoon with no idea of his own, while the television channels were mostly used by the APC supporters to show the PDP candidate (Goodluck Jonathan) as one who is not fit to continue in the position of the presidency. Both parties used mainstream media in fostering their gains and in negatively attacking the other. Similar tactics were also used over social media as the Nigerian internet during the elections was mostly divided into APC and PDP supporters (Dantani and Maigari, 2017, p. 15). Therefore, it is important to understand the impact of the Media on Elections.

### **3. The Impact of Media on Political Outcome**

A significant number of media variables can disrupt democratic development; one is fake news. The term “fake news” is defined as intentionally and deliberately presenting (usually) false or misleading statements that are misleading by design (Groshek, 2018). The deliberate use of the term “by design” refers to designing the systematic characteristics of the sources and channels of fake news dissemination, ultimately manipulating the audience’s cognitive process. Recent political events, especially during election campaigns, have led to increasing interest in the term “fake news”, which is generally believed to affect the outcome of political struggles.

Few scholars pay attention to the destructive potential and deceptiveness of fake news, and seldom pay attention to the analysis and derivation of the term “fake news”. According to Druckman (2005), the term “fake news” is a relatively new phenomenon in political communication dictionaries; thus making conceptual interpretation more problematic. To understand the compound word “fake news”, it is helpful to first understand the basic cognitive function of the original word. The so-called “mainstream media”, the current emphasis on “media” has always been their credibility as a source of factual information for consumers.

It becomes extremely important for media users to decipher which broadcast news source is trustworthy and which news source is not trustworthy or rejected. From the perspective of Hamman (2005), ignorantly accepting any news without critical analysis is very close to committing the fallacy of “argumentum ad verecundiam” (the fallacy of succumbing to potentially irrelevant authority).

I think mainstream media will make mistakes, but less credible sources or new forms of media, such as social media makes more mistakes. Such mistakes can lead to the formation of false beliefs by the announcer, which is why people see traditional news sources making changes or corrections to their editing or review process after a series of errors (high-key or low-key). In contrast, fake news deliberately conveys information in a way that is not bound by the truth, because its main purpose is to instil lies. Its target audience is to discredit political opponents) or mislead its audience.

Based on the above distinction, Pate & Yaraduwa (2017), defined “fake news” as the design and presentation of intentional and malicious statements as news, the sole purpose of which is to instil lies and mislead the target audience. Economist Dunaway (2015) agrees with this, and he defines “fake news” as headlines that have no factual basis but are still presented as real news. Recently, Facebook, which promised to curb the spread of fake news on its social network, stopped using the term “fake news” to support fake news. The term “fake news” has already had its own life; fake news spreads more clearly because it is fake news that is deliberately made false and intended to be confused with real news (Oremus, 2017).

The second variable which hinders democratic development is hate speech. Even though hate speech is popularly used to mean all speech and acts that incite or condone violence against others. Jibrin (2017) explained that researchers interested in the use of speech for violent intentions have found the term “hate speech” too wide and difficult to help monitor the phenomenon. For instance; Benesch (2014) notes that the word might mean the speaker hatred or desire to make the public targeted feel hated, or desire to make others hate the public targeted.

Sometimes hate speech encompass words and messages that are insulting to the targeted individuals. In international legislation; hate speech refers to expressions that advocate and incite harm. Comparative research on the phenomenon of hate speech has focused on the divide that exists between the American and European approaches to regulating hate speech (Rosenfeld, 2012; Bleich, 2003).

The Institute for Human Rights and Business (2013) cautions: 'Hate speech' is now a catch-all term that often includes an illegitimate opinion that can be banned under international law, and legitimate, offensive, insensitive communication mixing these two types of expression under the same heading is problematic.

After the 2007 presidential elections in Kenya for example, several politicians were arrested for hate speech and inciting the electorate to violence. The International Criminal Court (ICC) indicted Uhuru Kenyatta and William Ruto, (the serving President and Vice President respectively) for their roles in inciting and encouraging post-election violence which led to the death of over 1000 people. In Nigeria, the broadcast regulatory body, The National Broadcasting Commission has a general guideline on political reportage.

Article 3 (5) of the National Broadcasting Commission Decree (1992), stipulates that the media shall not publish or shall not broadcast political advertisements; advertisements and sponsored political news aimed at inciting hatred or incitement to violence. In the same vein, the decree discusses that the media rejects any intentional materials published or broadcast by political parties, candidates and other interested parties, which contain hateful or provocative speech and materials intended to be published or broadcast by political parties, candidates and other interested parties. However, this decree was not put into practice during the 2015 general elections by political parties.

During the 2015 general elections in Nigeria, the political campaigns were filled with hate speech targeted against the other. For example, the airing of anti-Buhari documentary was a notorious example that was repeatedly aired on the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA), a government-owned channel and African Independent Television (AIT) a privately owned channel. This documentary depicted Buhari as a farmer from the North with no knowledge of politics and development.

The National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) monitoring stations and compliance department monitors broadcast stations along with many operational standards including the use of language but there is no specific categorization of hate speech. Historically, however, there has been evidence of hate and dangerous speech in the Nigeria election right from the 1960s through 2015.

The sheikh Ahmed Lemu Panel that was instituted following the 2011 election violence acknowledges that elections in Nigeria have experienced violence since 1922 (National Human Rights Commission, 2015).

Onwuamalam (2014) looks at the 2015 election in Nigeria from the point of view of hate speech and propaganda. He was correct because most of the political adverts and communications were full of hate messages. The National Television Authority for example transmitted a 30-minute commercial program of Gladys Iyama who was sentenced by a military tribunal for drug trafficking when General Buhari was Head of State. The message intends to show Buhari as a ‘Merciless’ dictator in contrast with President Jonathan who was presented as compassionate” (Owuamalam, 2014, p. 30).

Another was the airing of a documentary on the African Independent Television (AIT) titled “The lion of Bourdillon”. This was scripted with the sole purpose of casting aspersion on Ahmed Bola Tinubu, the former Governor of Lagos state, to generate negative public opinion on his person. The TV station later tendered an apology to Tinubu who was the target (Oluwatosin, 2015). Owing to the violent form of hate speech used during the 2015 election, violent incidents leading to the lives of thousands were recorded in Nigeria. The table III.1 below shows a regional distribution of these violent incidents:

Table 1. Showing a geographical distribution of violent events during the 2015 election

Year	North East	North West	North Central	South East	South South	South West	Total
2015	9	8	26	5	29	28	105

Source (Ezeibe, 2021, p. 925).

The Nigerian 2015 general election, for example, took off in a heated and contentious manner with the supporters of the two prominent political parties, PDP and APC exchanging hate speech throughout the campaign. Until when the peace accord was signed by the political parties, in February, both parties freely used inciting and malicious statements against each other. Jibrin (2017) identifies five classes of hate speech that are obvious in campaign messages:

- Political advert and programs packaged and laced with hate speech. In this case, they are carefully prepared (mostly by Politicians) to create

divisions along various fault lines. One example was the anti-Buhari documentary (The Real Buhari) which was aired by the Africa Independent Television and National Television Authority in which he was presented as a religious bigot who hated Christians and Southerners.

- Another type is hate speech that appeared to be spontaneously uttered by politicians during campaign rallies, which were then repeated by the media. An example was the call by the former First Lady, Patience Jonathan for her supporters to stone APC candidates, and the call on the supporter of the PDP Katsina state to chapter to crush the opposition candidates who were called cockroaches by the then Governor of Katsina State, Ibrahim Shehu Shema. Also, the call by the Oba of Lagos to drive into the Lagoon (a euphemism for murder) all Igbo's who refuse to vote for his APC candidate. Yet other examples include those made by Gen. Buhari who talked about dogs and baboons soaking in blood, Muslims voting only for their kind or his arithmetic blunders of 97% and 5%. Others include the body bag statement by the governor of Kaduna state El Rufai etc.
- The third is hate speech embedded in local radio and television programs.
- The fourth is hate speech items that were retaliatory.
- Hate speech online that were generated by people who were trying to respond to hate speech that had offended them, but who could not afford the cost of generating it in the mainstream broadcast media.

Another study by Ibrahim, Pate, Pereira, Yau, Agbanyin & Bagu (2017) looks at the phenomenon of hate speech in the buildup of the 2015 election in Nigeria. The study was necessitated by the increase in the use of unethical communication content on media platforms to campaign for votes. The study established that hate speech and inciting messages were freely and massively deployed during the 2015 election in Nigeria packaged as a political advertisement. The study also revealed that hate speeches were transmitted and utilized by politicians and across different social media platforms.

Finally, the study concluded, that NBC, the regulatory body, failed to effectively monitor and/or penalize media organizations that disseminated hate

speeches. In my own opinion, Political hate speech usually exploits contentious issues plaguing the country e.g., Boko Haram, Herdsman/Farmer conflicts, Niger delta restiveness, kidnapping, Biafran agitation, Banditry in Zamfara. It could also be attributed to the body language, of politicians who encourage their followers to attack or destroy the properties or even kill their opponents.

## **F. Conclusion**

The concept of media has exerted a huge influence on the Nigerian electoral system. As discussed in the chapter, it is seen that during elections in Nigeria, the media is used as an avenue for public discussion, which in most cases allows for a variety of ideas and political sentiments to be widely spread. In such situations, people may use the media as a tool to increase support for their political parties, spread one-sided information or even spread hate speech against the opposition party or persons.

The Nigerian situation during the 2015 election saw great use of hate speech which expectedly influenced the election. The election which was one of the most defining elections in Nigerian history due to security and economic challenges were easily divided into a tribal, ethnic, and religious conflict. For this reason, PDP gained wide support from Christians since the President was a Christian, hence, hate speech targeted towards Muslims were used by the PDP members. Similarly, the opposition party which was predominantly Muslim in the North equally explored the usage of hate speech to target the president's party. The media served as the tool through which hate speech and propaganda passes through, therefore, both parties sought to make maximum exploitation of the media to reach their aims.

The chapter also talked about the Nigerian electoral system which is a majoritarian electoral system. Therefore, for a contestant to ensure electoral victory, he/she has to have a higher number of votes from the electorates. The quest to realise this higher number of votes explains why people use the media to reach a larger audience and to increase their chances of electoral victory.

#### **IV. DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS**

As mentioned by Uchenna (2019), the Nigerian media has certainly been extremely influential in the political structure of the nation. This study also supports this claim having discussed the various effects of media on the Nigerian election. Similarly, Owuamalam (2014, p. 31) explained the prominence of the media that has been used as a political tool in Nigeria since colonial times and is fully visible in the current Nigerian political atmosphere.

As shown in the study, it is seen that Media usage in Nigeria directly influences the political outcome of elections since media is used as a tool for the easy spread of information and as a result, makes way for widespread propaganda. This study above discusses that due to the universal nature of media as a system for mass communication, public office holders and politicians in Nigeria continue to exploit the mass element of media for their benefit. A similar submission was made by Ekeanyumu (2007, p. 19), who highlighted that in the Nigerian media, especially during voting times, the political divide amongst people becomes more visible due to the propaganda from political parties.

Based on the submission in this study, it was seen that the Nigerian's first republic saw how media was employed to spread propaganda, and this affected the overall political nature of the country, therefore, forcing the nation into a civil war. Although print media sources were the most available medium of communication in these times, a civil war was inevitable due to the partisan nature of the papers, putting one party against the other.

In discussing the influence of media on elections in Nigeria, Dantani and Maigari (2017, p. 15) relate the influence to the post-civil war and military era, wherein, media became a tool through which citizens fought for a return to democracy. As mentioned by Yakubu (2018), despite the military repression during the military era, the increased influence of the media during the military era stimulated Nigeria's return to democracy, therefore, increasing media's usage across the country.

The media in Nigeria has impacted all electoral outcomes since the return of the democratic government in 1999. Not only was media used as a campaign tool but it was also used as a centre of general public opinion, especially towards the ruling party. It must be noted that this general opinion shaped the feeling of the public towards the government from 1999 till the present times. As mentioned by Chiwendu (2017), leaders were not only concerned about winning elections through the media, they also wanted to develop a generally positive public image of themselves, therefore, using propaganda over the media.

In the 2003 elections, the media played a huge role in exposing fraud in the electoral process, especially the fraud involving incumbent parties. It is pertinent to note that incumbent governments in Africa generally and in Nigeria specifically are prone to be re-elected, therefore, the dominant party seeks to use the media as an important means of influencing election results and influencing voter behaviour to vote for them. The 2007 elections were a watershed moment in the country's history because of the media. It should be highlighted that before the 2007 general elections, Nigerians used the media as a means of calling for electoral reforms which were denied by the government. Therefore, the government understood that to maintain authority over the citizens, it is necessary to control the media.

The media in the 2011 elections played even a greater role especially in creating the needed awareness with regards to the two leading contestants. Social media was widely used as a campaign tool by all political parties in the country for raising supporters for their party and spread propaganda against the other party. Being one of the most popular forms of media which are widely accepted by all, social media was easily used to convey propaganda, spread fake news, disseminate hate speech, and it was useful to mobilize people to either negatively or positively advertise a political candidate.

Owing to the tremendous media impact, both new and contemporary media forms were greatly used in the 2015 elections to set agendas to express support for a candidate or to establish negative advertising for the other (Olatunji, 2010, p. 61). It is pertinent to note that both social media as well as mainstream media were immensely used to influence voters' perception in the 2015 elections in Nigeria.

These findings stated above can be viewed through the work of Lawrence (2015) in which he argues that the media influence elections by making the voter

recognize the name of a candidates or parties name or logo or slogan. This is very true concerning the Nigerian situation where most of the voters are illiterate hence party logos or slogans become a very useful tool for recognizing their preferred party and candidate. Additionally, in the Nigerian situation where the multi-party system is practised, media advertisements from political parties stimulate support and increase electoral support from citizens, therefore, in situations where the media channels are not duly utilized by the political parties, the party may become less popular which reduces their chances of being voted.

As highlighted by Mcquall (2010), political parties employ the usage of slogans, images, and symbols that when constantly advertised over the media may create a strong impression in the minds of the electorates, hence, creating support towards such parties. In Nigeria for example, during the 2015 general elections, the opposition party constantly displayed the missing Chibok schoolgirls to show the incompetence of the President's party towards security. This generated a large scale of distrust towards the president, therefore, increasing support for the opposition party.

In addition to the usage of images or symbols in influencing election outcome through the media, Druckman (2005) highlights that the media may also influence elections due to the issue of selective exposure because fact-checks can only relatively change the public perception generally and voters minds specifically. Although fact-checkers focus their attention on the positions of party candidates on the issue, data analysis tools can keep the media's high attention to the live elections as they progress. In Nigeria, the aspect of the fact check is taking a new twist because the media is beginning to dig up the past of politicians to see if anything that does not add up can be utilized to the candidate and the political party.

Election results are also subject to opinion polls conducted by the media because they will affect voters' opinions. We know that candidates' performance in opinion polls will affect the type of news they receive in the future, which will affect voters. The focus of the media is on the front-runners and the more broadcast time those candidates get, the higher they tend to climb in the polls, a dynamic that can turn into a self-perpetuating cycle. During the 2015 elections, several polls were conducted by media platforms some commentators believed that most of the poll results were doctored by the media to give the candidate they were supporting an

edge; this gave rise to conflicting poll results.

The media also impacts electoral outcomes through the instrumentality of political advertising. In Nigeria political advertising brings huge revenues for the media, they do all they can, they sometimes overindulge these politicians and help in no small ways to sway voter perception about political candidates and their parties (Olatunji, 2010). Advertising messages about political candidates and political parties are usually transmitted to the targeted audiences through different broadcast media available at any particular time. It is the awareness of the strategic importance of advertising and public relations that political gladiators often employ advertising. Oso (2012) understandably, therefore, argues that political advertising is a very important tool in the hands of political gladiators and they use it to create awareness to sway the public.

Nash (1994) in the same vein argues that political advertising is used to show how one politician or political party is better than another, political advertising is biased as it creates awareness, persuades, informs and urges or motivates the voting public to display subjectivity, this is one major way the electoral outcomes are influenced. In Nigeria political advertising is not properly regulated, hence often subject to abuse by all parties involved.

Political advertising may not ensure victory for a politician; it influences voters' opinions on the perception they have about the candidate. In Nigeria the contest between APC and PDP for example, the APC used more attack advertising against the PDP. The media also influences electoral outcomes through the propagation of hate speech for example in the 2015 Nigeria political campaign, hate speech was freely deployed by all the dominant political parties. Onwuamalam (2016) looks at the run-up to the 2015 election in Nigeria by commenting that nothing was been done to check the escalating trend to resort to hate speech by all parties he argues that most of the political adverts and communications were full of hate messages.

Table IV.1 below shows some of the most violent usage of hate speech between the two major contenders and their supporters during the 2015 Nigerian General in their campaigns to incite violence. Muhammadu Buhari belongs to the All Progressive Congress, and Goodluck Jonathan of the People's Democratic Party.

Table 2. A table showing the examples of hate speech used following the buildup of the Nigerian 2015 elections.

Speech Number	Year	Speech	Speaker
1	2013	There would be no peace in all of the Niger-Delta regions if Goodluck Jonathan is not made president in 2015.	Asari Dokubo was the leader of the Niger-Delta Peoples' Volunteer Force. Supporter of Goodluck Jonathan.
2	2014	The next election would be bloody, resulting in the death of many people if Buhari is not the president.	Nasir El-Rufai is a chairperson in the All Progressive Congress party and supports Muhammadu Buhari.
3	2014	The opponents are cockroaches and should be crushed.	This is a speech from Ibrahim Shehu Garba a governor and a supporter of the Goodluck Jonathan.
4	2014	The 2015 election will be a rig and roast where the All Progressive Congress will win the election through any means.	This speech was made by Bola Tinubu who is the national leader of the All Progressive Congress
5	2014	The 2015 election is a do or die affair where we will meet at the battlefield.	The speech was made by Asari Dokubo who was the leader of the Niger-Delta People's volunteer force.
6	2014	It is a sin if a Muslim does not vote for Buhari, so all Muslims must vote in Buhari as President.	This speech was made by Ima Sadiq, a Muslim cleric
7	2015	There is no such thing as change, attack anyone who says such.	This speech was made by Patience Jonathan who is the wife of Goodluck Jonathan.

The International Press Institute and Nigeria Press Council (IPC & NPC, 2015) undertook a study on the reportage of the 2015 elections. The study monitored the reportage of 12 national newspapers, 10 regional newspapers and four social media platforms. The study adopted a content analysis procedure to generate data on the reportage of the 2015 presidential election in Nigeria. The study's findings showed that newspaper reports of elections were skewed in favour of the dominant parties in that election APC and PDP, with little or no attention paid to the remaining 24 political parties at that time. The study also showed that stories capable of inciting one section of the country against the other were used and hate speech was also excessively used.

The media influences elections by creating a heated atmosphere for example the Nigerian 2015 general election, took off in a heated and contentious manner with the supporters of the two prominent political parties, Peoples Democratic Party

(PDP) and All Progressives Congress (APC) exchanging hate speech throughout the campaign, these were repeatedly reported in the media. Until when the peace accord was signed by the political parties, in February, both parties freely used inciting and malicious statements against each other.

For further understanding of the impact of media in Nigeria's 2015 general election, the study conducted by Ibrahim, Pate, Pereira, Yau, Agbanyin & Bagu (2017) demonstratively looks at the phenomenon of hate speech in the buildup of the 2015 election in Nigeria. The study showed the increase in the use of unethical communication content on media platforms to campaign for votes. The study established that hate speech and inciting messages were freely and massively deployed during the 2015 election in Nigeria and packaged as a political advertisement. The study also revealed that hate speeches were transmitted and utilized by politicians and across different social media platforms.

Hate speech carried a lot of weight indirectly because the public generally does not have confidence in the security structure to provide a conducive atmosphere for a violent free election, hence most voters stay away from polling stations because of hate speech, this creates a form of voter apathy which is a negative influence on voting behaviour because it reduces voter turnout drastically in an environment where there is already a voter disenchantment with the whole political system.

Hate speech as well as other forms of partisan politics has resulted in the usage of the media to promote election violence in the country. Violence regarding elections in Nigeria may happen before and/or after elections. As highlighted the Demarest and Langer (2019, p. 91), the media in Nigeria, especially during the 2015 national elections reported election violence differently, according to their affiliation.

The Africa Independent Television (AIT), which was a strong supporter of the People's Democratic Party reported that electoral malpractices were been conducted in certain polling units which was the reason for the violence in such regions (Orji, 2017, p. 712). Similarly, Channels Television, which was a supporter of the All Progressive Congress passed information claiming that candidates for the People's Democratic Party were responsible for the election violence, hence, they should be held responsible.

Similarly, the style of reporting and language used during the electoral period differed from one station to the next and this further increased electoral violence in the country during the 2015 election. According to Ugbudian (2021, p. 215), the hate campaigns that were advertised over the Nigerian media between political parties was seen as a sequel to the same campaign in 2011 which saw over 800 people dead. Although they are no official numbers on the number of persons who were killed as a result of the violence, the Nigerian Human Rights Commission (NHRC) mentions that over 58 persons were killed before the election as a result of pre-election violence in 22 states (Ibeh, 2015). This violence was said to have been caused as a result of the manipulative writing style of different media sources which positioned the supporters of one party over the other.

According to Fanoro and Ughegbe (2015, p.6 ), the nature of the media during the 2015 elections was rather spiteful than informative, therefore, this resulted in large scale violence on the part of both parties which even attracted the attention of the International Criminal Court (ICC). The nature of violence that was looming during the election forced the government to postpone the election date to ensure the safety and security of all, however, this only gave people more time to redistribute their stories which further exacerbated the electoral conflict in the country (Hamalai, Samuel, & Shola, 2017, p. 34). They were polling units where unknown gunmen attacked, sporadically killing people, and this forced the major parties (Peoples' Democratic Party and All People's Congress) pointing fingers at each other (Demarest and Langer, 2021, p. 106).

It is no doubt that the media contributed to the ruthless nature of the electoral process as supporters of various parties were mostly encouraged to face each other violently through new and traditional media sources. The pre-election violence in the 2015 elections forced both presidential aspirants to come on TV, encouraging their supporters to be peaceful and non-violent, however, this did not yield much since propaganda and hate speech were already fast spread (Ibeh, 2015).

In summary, while it is true that the media did impact elections particularly the 2015 elections, the use of the media in most instances was very unprofessional, selective coverage, biased and skewed toward primordial sentiments and limited by regulatory corruption. The study showed that the Nigerian Broadcasting Commission (NBC), which is the nation's media regulatory body, failed to effectively monitor or

penalize media organizations that engaged in unprofessional conduct such as propagation of hate speeches, fake news among others. It is a well-known truism that politically motivated hate speech usually exploits contentious issues plaguing the country. It is also motivated directly by politicians who encourage their followers to attack or destroy the properties or even kill their opponents.

The media to a great extent determines what to cover in their programming and what issues or talking items to include (Ahrend, 2001, p. 25). A presidential candidate representing any of the numerous smaller parties could easily argue that his/her unsuccessful election campaign was due to the lack of mainstream broadcast media coverage. As a conclusion, it is discussed that any mainstream broadcast media coverage, good or bad exerts a strong influence on the Nigerian electoral process.

## **V. SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **A. Conclusion**

It is no doubt that media in Nigeria is of utmost importance for the dissemination of information, raising awareness and communication. However, most importantly, media in Nigeria has been explored as a vital medium for political activity, hence, the media has been used as a political element to influence electoral results and to influence voters behaviours. Similarly, owing to the majoritarian electoral system of Nigeria, the main aim of every political party is to gather as many supporters as they can, hence, using the media to fulfil this aim.

It is no doubt that the usage of the media for political purposes comes with it numerous negative and positive impacts as discussed in the study. Negative impacts allude to the usage of demographical differences to put one political party against the other as was seen in the 2015 general elections where the APC constantly used religion as a tool against the PDP. Not only did this create a Muslim Vs. Christian political conflict but this also led to media channels publicly broadcasting hate speeches fuelled by religious fanatics.

The media in Nigeria, although attaining certain levels of liberalism is still very much under the control of political parties, therefore, as discussed in the study, various media channels are caught in the alignment war, serving the interest of one political party over the other. It was also discussed that the state-owned television channel known as National Television Authority was also coerced into making positive advertisements for the president while depicting the opposition party as unfit for leadership during the 2015 general election.

Similarly, the opposition party employed other media channels as television stations for their benefit, portraying the president as weak and highlighting that the country needed a change. The battle for media control between the major parties became the main aim as both parties understood the impact of media in shaping electoral outcomes in the country. The thesis also discusses the agenda-setting theory

and how media can be used by political parties to set agendas that bring about a particular outcome. Agenda-setting is usually used in influencing members of the society to act in a particular way, according to the interest of the person spreading the agenda. Hence, the media with its universal reaching powers is the best way to spread information and set agendas.

For Nigeria, the usage of media is very common, therefore, people come across various information, some of which may be from questionable sources. This information received may most times be believed without prior confirmation or testing, hence, people are prone to believing fake news over the media, especially through the usage of social media in present times. The 2015 Nigerian general election was targeted with fake news from the camps of the two main political parties (APC, and PDP), this news, however, was believed by many Nigerians and this influenced the general election outcome after the election.

Despite the negative impacts of media on politics in Nigeria, the study also discussed the positive impacts caused by media in Nigeria's politics. The media play important roles in enabling citizens to monitor the activities and actions of political office holders and policymakers and to use this information in their voting decisions. The knowledge of this power of the citizenry leads to government accountability and responsiveness to the needs of the citizens. It is no doubt that citizen participation in politics is a clear indication of civic duties, therefore, for any democracy, the growth of civic and political activities influences the political development of the state.

Owing to the introduction of new media such as social media, it has become easy for news to be disseminated in real-time from one location to the other, hence, what is happening in the North of Nigeria can easily be watched or relayed in real-time to someone in the East. This easy means of spreading information has increased citizen participation in politics and most cases have exposed the lies told by political elites. This explains the importance of establishing regulatory bodies to check the spread of harmful information as well as hate speech over media channels.

The thesis shows a setback on government reforms in ensuring a safe media space is used by all, especially during election periods. The Nigeria media, even with the freedom of information Act passed by law still lacks the will and is sometimes incapable of getting required information from the government ministries, agencies, departments and parastatals. The position of the government on modern media report

structure and mechanism, and the mutual respect between both entities strongly represents how the news will be projected and valued. The tradition of free and independent media is catching up with developing countries like Nigeria albeit slowly.

The media generally to a significant extent determine the political knowledge of citizens and drive voter turnout. The traditional role of the media is their watchdog role, to inform and educate the viewers who are also the electorates; other major roles include the enablement of public participation in the electoral process. They often provide their platforms for politicians and political parties to communicate their messages to the electorates and to get feedback from the electorates on their expectations and in extension showcase their popularity.

The media is thus considered as a primary player in the electoral process because the content of the information transmitted and consumed by the viewer, ultimately help determine the voting pattern of the viewer. The final decision on who to vote for depends on the information available at the disposal of voters most of this information or knowledge is mostly based on the media reports. But it must be stated that the media in the electoral process, does not operate in a vacuum but are attended to by the socio-political configuration of the society in which they operate.

In current times, the role of media as the fourth pillar of democracy in Nigeria continues to increase and this has transcended the general outlook to include other socio-economic aspects of the society. Youths who are the main users of social media in the country are actively engaged in establishing political networks across the country which allows them to petition government workers to meet the needs of the society and to expose government officials for their wrongdoings.

## **B. Major Findings**

From the data analyzed the following findings were made;

1. The media in Nigeria has the power to create political tension through its reportage and coverage which is mostly influenced by political parties.
2. Through the usage of social and mainstream media in Nigeria, negative and positive political advertisement is being conveyed to influence electoral processes and results in Nigeria.

3. The media in Nigeria helps shape the key talking points during elections; most times through the help of the media the burning political cum developmental issues are relegated to the background this is a reoccurring trend thereby giving the politicians a soft landing.
4. The usage of media outlets, especially mainstream media in the 2015 Nigerian election was strictly divided to support one party over the other, therefore, both APC and PDP party members exploited media usage to mobilize the general public.
5. Owing to the increased usage of social media in the country, it has become easy to spread propaganda, fake news and hate speeches which continues to limit the credibility of news sources and influence electorates during the voting process. Additionally, in instances where such social media platforms are used to pass information, the citizens do not bother to verify the authenticity and credibility of the news being spread.
6. Social media has made it possible to bypass the traditional gatekeepers of news in Nigeria; opening a flood gate of news and information with negative and positive consequences.
7. Political news, information and advertising is no longer restricted to the city Centre's and or urban areas but are now assessable in the rural areas.
8. Most of the media organizations have been high jacked by politicians or their proxies in terms of ownership or editorship (most of the media aides to politicians in government at the state and federal level are usually picked from media houses, not academics or consultants).
9. The Nigerian media help determine the overall voting pattern due to the content and the volume of what their various public consumes.

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