



POLITICAL PARTIES' COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES AND VOTERS' BEHAVIOUR IN THE 2023 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Political party's communication strategies played a crucial role in shaping voter behaviour during Nigeria's 2023 presidential election. This study investigated the communication strategies employed by major political parties - the All Progressives Congress (APC), Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), and Labour Party (LP) - and their influence on voter behaviour. The research adopted framing theory as its theoretical framework, drawing on Entman's (1993) conceptualisation of how communicators use salience and selection to shape public perception. Data were collected from secondary sources, including academic literature, media reports, and institutional publications, and analysed using qualitative content analysis. The findings reveal a paradigmatic shift in Nigerian political communication, characterised by the convergence of traditional media engagement, digital and social media campaigns, data analytics and micro-targeting, negative campaigning, and celebrity endorsements. The Labour Party's 'Obidient Movement' distinguished itself through innovative social media strategies that mobilised younger, urban voters around reformist messaging, while the APC leveraged established grassroots networks and traditional media to secure rural support. However, the election was also marred by the pervasive spread of misinformation, hate speech, and ethno-religious appeals, which contributed to voter apathy and fear-driven electoral choices, reflected in a turnout of only 27% of eligible voters. The study concludes that while digital technologies facilitated more substantive issue-oriented discourse, the persistence of divisive identity politics and disinformation undermined electoral integrity. These findings underscore the need for institutional reforms and a fundamental reorientation of political communication culture to strengthen democratic participation and mitigate the negative effects of unethical communication practices in future elections.

Keywords: Political party, Communication strategies, Voters' behaviour, Presidential election

INTRODUCTION

A key component of political parties' activities is political communication, which shapes voter behaviour and election outcomes. Romarheim (2005) viewed political communication strategies as carefully planned methods adopted by government, political parties and politicians to disseminate their messages. These strategies have the potential to shape public opinion, galvanise voters' support and persuade citizens. In most democracies, particularly those that organise periodic elections, political parties use advanced communication techniques to interact with people, rally support, and maintain their relevance.

During the 2015 election, however, a noticeable shift began, with the All Progressives Congress (APC) leveraging social media to build a robust digital presence, especially among young voters. This marked a turning point in Nigerian political communication, as digital platforms became more central to campaign strategies (Opeibi, 2019). Despite limited internet penetration at the time, the APC's digital engagement strategy, combined with its use of emotionally charged anti-incumbency rhetoric, played a significant role in its electoral victory. This development has been especially noticeable in Nigeria, particularly during the 2023 presidential election. In one of the most competitive elections in the nation's history, the three major political parties, the Labour Party (LP), the People's Democratic Party (PDP), and the All Progressives Congress (APC), used a variety of communication strategies to engage a highly divided electorate. The 2023 election demonstrated a paradigm shift in political communication, with traditional channels like radio, television, and newspapers complemented by greater use of digital media and social networks. Parties were able to interact directly with voters, largely thanks to social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and Twitter. Bypassing conventional gatekeepers like journalists and editors, this direct communication enabled parties to deliver uncensored statements to the general public (Oboh & Tolu-Kayode, 2023).

For example, the Labour Party used realistic and creative advertising that connected with young people to leverage social media's ability to mobilise young voters. This strategy aligned with worldwide trends, which show that social media campaigns are increasingly important in shaping decisions and voting behaviour, especially among younger populations (Enli, 2017; Vaccari & Valeriani, 2021). All the political parties that participated in the 2023 presidential election, especially the major parties, adopted various communication strategies to sway voters to their side. The APC framed its campaign slogans around its accomplishments in governance and its future plans, emphasising policy continuity and stability. Targeting older voters and rural communities less affected by digital media, this strategy relied mainly on traditional media (Afolabi & Adeyemi, 2023).

However, to criticise the incumbent party's performance and establish itself as a viable alternative, the PDP adopted a more aggressive framing strategy, focusing on issues such as inflation, unemployment, and insecurity (Ezekiel et al., 2023). In contrast, the Labour Party, leveraging its outsider status, ran an innovative social media-centric campaign that highlighted reform and transparency, appealing to young, urban, and disenchanted voters seeking change from the status quo. Voter views and party agenda interpretation are significantly influenced by media framing. For example, the PDP and Labour Party employed framing strategies to highlight the APC's administration's shortcomings, especially in addressing security and economic issues (Matthes, 2019).

A key tactic in contemporary political communication is the framing and repetition of political messages, which has been demonstrated to have a significant impact on voter attitudes and decisions (Iyengar, 1991; Entman, 1993). However, the election also revealed the negative aspects of political communication, especially the prevalence of misinformation. On social

media, false narratives and fake news spread widely, confusing users and possibly influencing their voting decisions. According to Adedeji (2025), social media exposes voters to misinformation and disinformation, thereby enhancing political deception.

The systematic use of disinformation campaigns to undermine opponents and deepen political divisions underscores the urgency of combating false narratives to preserve electoral integrity (Allcott & Gentzkow, 2017). During the 2023 Nigerian elections, disinformation was employed not only to shape opinions but also to undermine voter confidence and turnout. There were many unsubstantiated claims regarding the Independent National Electoral Commission's (INEC) integrity, accusations of vote rigging, and the spread of fake election results (Okonkwo et al., 2023). Although vote buying is a common practice at elections in Nigeria (Siyanbola & Adedeji, 2025), the dissemination of disinformation creates a climate of mistrust, especially among young and first-time voters, underscoring the need for political parties and electoral bodies to aggressively counter such narratives through open communication.

In democratic societies, political communication is expected to inform, educate, and engage the electorate. Political parties are generally expected to use communication to present their ideologies, outline their policy agendas, and foster inclusive dialogue that supports informed voting. Effective communication should strengthen democratic norms by encouraging public participation, promoting transparency, and building trust in electoral institutions. In ideal conditions, political messaging helps citizens make rational choices, supports peaceful political competition, and enhances the legitimacy of election outcomes (Norris, 2002). Within this normative framework, political party communication is not merely a campaign tool but a cornerstone of democratic governance and civic engagement.

Problems such as the pervasive spread of false information, increased vote-buying, voter indifference, and election violence highlighted the detrimental effects of poorly implemented communication tactics. Social media offers greater opportunities for voter engagement, but it has also become a platform for disseminating divisive material and fake news. In addition to distorting voters' opinions of politicians, the spread of fake news exacerbated political polarisation and made it more difficult for people to make logical, issue-based decisions (Olagunju et al., 2020). Additionally, by sending the public the message that democracy might be commercialised, this trend undermined the integrity of the democratic process (Oni, 2019).

Political parties and candidates' use of divisive language increased hostility between supporters of opposing parties, leading to altercations that disrupted the voting process. This culture of violence undermined public trust in the democratic process and discouraged voting, especially among vulnerable populations. Some residents were unable to exercise their democratic rights due to intimidation stemming from fear of violence (Adekunle & Yusuf, 2022).

These difficulties show how urgently political party communication strategies and their role in voters' behaviour need to be critically examined. The democratic process depends heavily on effective communication, but when it is abused, it can have serious repercussions for social cohesiveness and governance. Consequently, this study examines the role of political parties' communication strategies in voter behaviour using the 2023 presidential election in Nigeria. This is to ascertain the extent to which these communication strategies shaped voters' behaviour. This paper is divided into the following sections: literature review, which establishes a connection between political communication and voters' behaviour, followed by a section on the description of the theoretical framework guiding this study and the method used in collecting and analysing data, next is the analysis of the political communication strategies of political parties during the 2023 presidential election and voters' behaviour and finally a concluding section.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Gomez and Wilson (2023) examined how repeated messages and slogans affect voter recall and decision-making through a series of controlled experiments. Over the course of these tests, participants were continuously exposed to the same unambiguous campaign messaging. The findings demonstrated that voters' recall of important campaign themes was greatly enhanced by this frequent exposure, which in turn affected their voting decisions. The study demonstrates the effectiveness of recurring slogans in expressing campaign issues and influencing voter preferences, thus suggesting that voters can develop a closer bond with significant political issues through regular messaging.

Sule (2022) investigated the impact of political party communication tactics on Nigerian voters in both urban and rural areas. The results demonstrated that whereas conventional media and face-to-face interactions had a greater influence on voting behaviour in rural areas, digital campaigns and social media have a greater influence on voters in urban areas. The probable explanation for this is better internet access and higher literacy levels.

Gibson et al. (2024) investigated micro-targeting in political campaigns. They analysed data from digital ads and conducted in-depth interviews with campaign managers. According to their findings, using social media for micro-targeting enables campaigns to craft messaging for specific voter groups, which can sway undecided voters and strengthen the resolve of devoted supporters. This study emphasises the growing importance of digital platforms and data analytics in shaping contemporary political campaigns, a trend becoming increasingly common globally. Campaigns can increase their chances of influencing election results by tailoring their messaging to different groups.

Zaller (1992) investigated how voters process political information using a survey-based methodology. Voters are more likely to accept communications that align with their pre-existing ideas, according to the study. According to Zaller's 'receive-accept-sample' model, political parties can more effectively influence voter behaviour if they craft their messaging to align with the views of prospective supporters. Delli Carpini and Keeter (1996) investigated the influence of political knowledge on voting behaviour in a variety of demographic groups using surveys. According to their research, people who know more about politics typically cast better-informed ballots. They are also less susceptible to manipulation by external factors, such as false information or unfavourable political advertisements.

By examining posts on Facebook and Twitter throughout election campaigns, Samuels (2019) delved deeply into how social media influences voter behaviour. According to the study, these platforms are now essential for political communication because they enable candidates to interact directly with voters, shape public opinion, and mobilise their followers. It also emphasised how younger consumers, who are more active online, are drawn to social media. This demonstrates the increasing importance of social media in today's political environment, as campaigns use these platforms to connect with voters in ways that are just not possible with traditional media.

MATERIALS AND METHOD

The study used a qualitative content analysis method to analyse data collected, sourced from secondary sources. Qualitative research methodology offers rich interpretive possibilities for understanding complex social phenomena, particularly in political and governance studies. Among the various qualitative approaches, content analysis stands out as a systematic, replicable technique for analysing textual data into meaningful content categories using explicit coding rules. Content analysis has been defined as a research technique for making replicable

and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the contexts of their use (Krippendorff, 2018).

Holsti (1969) views content analysis as an objective, systematic technique for inferring meaning by identifying specific message characteristics. Under this expansive definition, the technique is not restricted to textual analysis but may be applied to other areas, such as coding student drawings or coding of actions observed in videotaped studies (Holsti, 1969). This conceptual breadth allows researchers to adapt content analysis across diverse research contexts, from political communication to health policy analysis.

Secondary data refers to information collected by someone other than the user for purposes other than the researcher's specific project (Johnston, 2014). In qualitative research, secondary sources encompass a wide range of materials, including government publications, institutional reports, POLICY documents, organisational records, and media content. According to Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias (2008), secondary data provides researchers with cost-effective access to large volumes of information that would be impractical to collect independently. However, researchers must be aware of several limitations. As Yin (2003) emphasises, research that relies on a single source is rated low in quality while multiple sources are rated higher. Thus, methodological triangulation through multiple secondary sources strengthens research validity.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: FRAMING THEORY

Erving Goffman's sociological discoveries in Frame Analysis, which examined how individuals interpret events using frames that organise reality, served as the foundation for framing theory (Goffman, 1974). Framing theory was later refined in communication studies by Entman (1993), who argued that communicators use salience and selection to highlight specific elements of a topic to influence public perception. By emphasising particular characteristics or situations, frames shape people's thoughts and feelings about various subjects. To influence voters' ideas and attitudes, political communication uses framing in a variety of ways, including thematic and emotional framing.

Iyengar (1991) emphasised the distinction between episodic and thematic framing to show how different framing techniques shape audience interpretation. For instance, thematic frames focus on systemic elements, promoting a more comprehensive understanding of social issues, whereas episodic frames focus on individuals' experiences, evoking empathy and emotional responses.

To optimise their impact on voter perception, political parties create frames that complement their message objectives; hence, this distinction is crucial to political communication. As it illustrates how political parties shape voter views by prioritising some aspects of an issue over others, framing theory is directly pertinent to the study of political party communication strategies and voter behaviour.

Additionally, framing theory clarifies how parties handle crises or unfavourable opinions. To lessen public outrage, a party may, for example, present a crisis as a "lesson learned" or a request for "more transparency." This framing can preserve voter confidence, shift the blame, and improve the party's reputation. Framing theory is therefore crucial for understanding how political parties' communication strategies shape voters' decisions. Framing theory is criticised for its conceptual ambiguity, despite its value, because the term "frame" is sometimes used too widely, leading to conflicting meanings and methodological issues in empirical research. Additionally, critics contend that because framing theory frequently presumes that frames passively shape perceptions without accounting for how people might oppose or reinterpret messages based on their views, it undervalues audience

agency (Chong & Druckman, 2007). Notwithstanding, it offers insight into how political parties communicate with voters to influence their decisions.

ANALYSIS OF POLITICAL PARTIES' COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES AND VOTERS' BEHAVIOUR IN THE 2023 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

In the modern political environment, political parties need to use efficient communication techniques in order to connect with voters, sway public opinion, and win elections. Political parties worldwide, including in Nigeria, have embraced multidimensional strategies that combine traditional media, digital platforms, targeted messages, grassroots mobilisation, and, at times, contentious tactics such as negative campaigning. Every tactic is intended to appeal to a particular demographic, frequently using social and cultural circumstances to target different voting groups. Each of these strategies is discussed below:

Traditional media engagement

Globally, traditional media, which includes print newspapers, radio, and television, continues to be the most popular medium for political communication. To reach a large audience, political parties in many nations rely on conventional media, especially in areas with poor internet connectivity. For instance, political campaigns in the United States heavily rely on television advertisements, spending billions of dollars during election cycles (Iyengar & Simon, 2020).

These commercials are deliberately designed to discredit opponents, appeal to particular groups, or deliver important policy ideas. Reaching both urban and rural communities in Nigeria requires traditional media. This is because it may be accessed in remote locations and is a vital information source for people without internet access; the radio has a particularly significant impact. To appeal to ethnic and linguistic groups, the All Progressives Congress (APC) and the People's Democratic Party (PDP) used radio broadcasts to reach voters across Nigeria's 36 states during the 2019 general elections. These broadcasts were frequently in local languages. Nigerian political parties also used newspaper articles and television advertisements to convey their policy priorities and highlight their rivals' shortcomings. These strategies worked particularly well in rural areas, where groups that may feel cut off from the digital world find great resonance in political messages broadcast on radio and television. (Orji & Uzodike, 2020).

Digital and social media campaigns

Political communication has changed globally with the emergence of social media platforms, granting political parties a viable means to directly address their technologically literate younger electorates. Social media comprises Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and, increasingly, TikTok, all of which allow bypassing gatekeeper media and providing a direct interface with citizens (Enli, 2017). Social media campaign activities are also common in established democracies. In the United States, former President Barack Obama's 2008 and 2012 campaigns initially established the use of social media, and his later counterparts, Donald Trump and Joe Biden, utilised tools like Twitter to target voters and influence media agendas (Kreiss, 2016).

Data analytics and micro targeting

In recent years, microtargeting and data analytics have become crucial parts of political campaigns. Political parties can create highly targeted messages that appeal to specific voter groups by gathering information on voter behaviour, preferences, and demographics. In Barack Obama's 2012 re-election campaign, the U.S. Democratic Party famously employed this

strategy, carefully analysing voter data to pinpoint undecided voters and craft messages that addressed their concerns (Hersh, 2015). Since then, microtargeting has become commonplace in elections across the globe, with parties spending money on advanced tools to divide up the voter base and create individualised outreach plans.

In Nigeria, data-driven campaigning is only beginning to take shape but has gained traction among leading political parties. APC and PDP during the 2023 election period both used data analytics in segmenting the voters by age, geographical location, and socio-economic status. This helped parties create more targeted campaigns, dealing with top issues such as security in the northern states, economic reform in urban centres, and infrastructure development in the south (Adebayo & Ibrahim, 2023). By tailoring their messages to these distinct demographic groups, Nigerian parties aimed to address localised concerns and boost their appeal among undecided voters.

Negative campaigning and attack ads

In many democracies, negative campaigning, which emphasises an opponent's alleged shortcomings, is a popular communication tactic because it can effectively influence undecided voters by fostering mistrust and scepticism. Negative campaigning is just as common in Nigeria as in other democratic countries. Negative campaign messaging also permeated social media, where popular videos and hashtags helped spread criticism to sway public opinion. Despite being divisive, these acts affected voters' choices by casting doubt on the politicians and encouraging them to make emotional choices (Okoro & Nwafor, 2013).

Influencer partnerships and celebrity endorsements

In an effort to attract a wider audience and win over younger voters, political parties worldwide are increasingly working with celebrities and influencers. Celebrities can inspire sizable fan bases and give political campaigns legitimacy, especially if they are seen as approachable or socially minded. High-profile endorsements from celebrities like Taylor Swift, Jay-Z, and Oprah Winfrey have become typical in the US as political parties have realised how influential celebrities can be in influencing public opinion (Street, 2019).

Political parties in Nigeria have also capitalised on the popularity of celebrity endorsements, particularly on social media sites where Nigerian celebrities have sizable fan bases. Well-known Nigerian singers, actresses, and celebrities openly supported candidates and urged their followers to cast ballots during the 2023 election. Young voters, who frequently look to celebrities for social and political leadership, were particularly affected by this tendency. Nigerian youth are very active on Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube, where their endorsements were widely shared. For example, Nigerian actors and artists vocally endorsed Peter Obi of the Labour Party, increasing his appeal to young, urban voters (Afolayan & Udeze, 2023).

ROLE OF THESE STRATEGIES ON VOTER BEHAVIOUR

In Nigeria's 2023 presidential election, political party communications strategy revolutionised voter behaviour by profoundly changing how people viewed, interacted with, and eventually cast their votes for candidates. Young people's increased political consciousness and voting behaviour were the most notable outcomes, primarily driven by their strategic use of social media. Among others, Peter Obi of the Labour Party (LP) used social media platforms including Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, and Twitter to spread his campaign message and build an online political community.

Influencer activism and celebrity endorsements also had a significant psychological and behavioural effect on Nigerian voters, particularly the younger generation. Well-known

influencers and musicians like Mr. Macaroni, Psquare, and Falz openly supported Peter Obi as the "people's candidate." By encouraging followers and supporters to vote for the candidate that their favourite celebrities publicly support, celebrities' endorsements acted as social evidence and influenced political identification. The strategy greatly raised political interest among fans that would not otherwise be politically inclined and politicised political discourse in pop culture domains (Afolayan & Udeze, 2023).

The waning of ethnic voting patterns among urban populations was another significant consequence of the political communication tactic. Ethnic allegiance remained a significant factor in rural voters' decisions, but the 2023 election revealed a shift in urban communication tactics, with a greater emphasis on national cohesion and performance. Ethnic identity was purposefully downplayed during Peter Obi's campaign, which instead focused on competence, youth inclusion, and governance reform. In a study by Iguve and Mnzughulga (2025), the authors observed that Peter Obi's issue-based messaging resonated with the youths who voted for him, driven by his social media engagement.

Voter behaviour in rural areas was also impacted by grassroots communications and traditional media. Voters in rural and older areas were more receptive to radio advertisements, live campaign rallies, and grassroots mobilisation than urban millennials, who were influenced by social media. To disseminate campaign pledges in local languages, the APC, for example, mobilised local opinion leaders and party agents through its established grassroots networks in the North. Voters who preferred in-person interactions to social media remained loyal and felt more confident as a result. In an effort to achieve high turnout and loyalty in these areas, it also repeatedly emphasised key messages such as continuity, security, and local representation (Eze & Nwafor, 2023).

Another communication tactic that governed political communications to influence voters' perceptions was emotional framing. "Emi Lokan" ("It's my turn") by Bola Tinubu spoke to Yoruba feelings of duty and political anticipation, while Peter Obi positioned himself as a reformer capable of establishing a "New Nigeria." Politicians and voters developed psychological bonds through these emotionally compelling messages, leading many voters to base their decisions not just on objective policy concerns but also on group and personal affinity (Adigun, 2023). Political campaigns gained momentum through emotionally charged communication that made supporters feel a sense of urgency and a shared desire.

Political party tactics that promoted sharable content, such as memes, slogans, and viral videos, increased peer influence and informal communication. These avenues of communication permeated regular social settings, such as marketplaces, offices, schools, and churches, where they sparked discussions that affected the behaviour of lone voters. Co-workers, friends, and relatives began to influence politics, especially among swing voters. Through well-known social connections, this unofficial communication network was utilised to validate political views and expand the reach of official campaign communications (Chukwu & Bello, 2023).

CONCLUSION

The 2023 presidential election in Nigeria marked a watershed moment in the country's political communication landscape, as political parties deployed multifaceted strategies that departed from traditional campaigning while simultaneously revealing the enduring influence of identity politics. The election, contested primarily by Bola Ahmed Tinubu of the All Progressives Congress (APC), Atiku Abubakar of the Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP), and Peter Obi of the Labour Party, witnessed an unprecedented convergence of issue-based discourse, social media mobilisation, and, paradoxically, the intensification of ethno-religious rhetoric that shaped voter behaviour in complex ways.

A defining feature of campaign communication was the embrace of issue-based messaging as a public relations tool across the major political parties, though with varying degrees of authenticity and effectiveness. Research on campaign strategies indicates that some political parties focused predominantly on restructuring the Nigerian economy and improving the country's security, while also engaging with non-developmental issues; hate speech was the most recurring non-issue-based message among all three parties (Rasheed, 2024). The Labour Party, under Peter Obi's candidacy, distinguished itself through a branding strategy that emphasised youth empowerment, anti-corruption, and economic reform, positioning the candidate as an alternative to the established political duopoly. This strategic focus on substantive policy concerns resonated particularly with urban, educated voters and contributed to the emergence of the "Obidient Movement" (Nwaonuma, 2025).

Social media platforms, especially Twitter (now X), Facebook, WhatsApp, and Instagram, emerged as the primary arenas for political contestation, fundamentally reshaping the relationship between political actors and the electorate. These digital spaces enabled real-time political engagement, allowing candidates to bypass traditional media gatekeepers and communicate directly with voters. The Obidient Movement, in particular, leveraged platforms like Twitter and Instagram to spread its messages, organise rallies, and galvanise public support, creating an unprecedented grassroots mobilisation structure in Nigerian electoral politics (Akporue & Efebeh, 2023). Research confirms that X was the most widely used and influential social media platform for political engagement during the election, vital for enhancing participatory democracy and informing people in real time (Morah & Nwafor, 2024).

The APC's communication strategies demonstrated the deployment of professional public relations expertise through a formidable media team that included figures such as Dele Alake, Festus Keyamo, and Bayo Onanuga. These operatives engaged in vigorous defence of their candidate, countering opposition narratives through press conferences, television appearances, and strategic social media engagement. The APC campaign effectively utilised a multifaceted approach, combining news reports, radio and television programmes, town hall meetings, community relations, and extensive advertising across various media platforms (Abimiku et al., 2024). Similarly, the PDP's campaign, led by Atiku Abubakar, drew upon the candidate's extensive media connections and political experience to project a vision of national unity and economic revival.

However, the strategic communications landscape was significantly marred by the pervasive deployment of hate speech and ethno-religious appeals, which shaped voter behaviour in ways that compounded societal divisions. The 2023 election witnessed an escalation of inflammatory rhetoric across all major parties, with candidates and their supporters exploiting ethnic and religious identities to mobilise voters (Aondover et al, 2026). Prominent instances included ethno-regional appeals by APC figures and the PDP candidate's suggestion that Northerners need not support candidates from other regions. This toxic campaign environment had measurable consequences: despite the heightened political engagement on social media, only 27% of eligible voters participated in the election, a decline from the 1999 return to democracy. The spread of hate speech and misinformation contributed to voter apathy and fear-driven electoral choices, undermining the democratic promise of increased political participation (Aondover et al, 2026).

The Labour Party's communication strategy, which foregrounded Peter Obi's personal integrity and technocratic competence, proved particularly effective in mobilising younger, urban voters. The "Obidient Movement" expanded the confines of political discourse to marketplaces, motor parks, town halls, and university campuses, delivering a message of a "new Nigeria" focused on good governance, rule of law, and economic transformation (The

Punch, 2023). However, the party's digital-first approach had significant limitations; research on the Labour Party's branding strategies revealed that while digital engagement invigorated urban voters, limited rural reach and the persistence of cultural affiliations and ethnicism constrained the party's electoral outcomes more broadly (Nwaonuma, 2025).

The 2023 presidential election thus reveals a dual character in Nigerian political communication: the emergence of more substantive, issue-oriented discourse facilitated by digital technologies, coexisting with the persistence and even intensification of divisive ethno-religious messaging. This duality reflects the broader political culture's hybrid character, where appeals to rational self-interest and ethnic solidarity compete for voters' allegiance. The challenge for future elections lies in strengthening the former while mitigating the latter, a task that will require both institutional reforms and a fundamental reorientation of political communication culture.

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