

Chapter 7

Social Media, Citizens' Participation in Elections, and the Proverbial Dividends of Democracy in Nigeria's Fourth Republic

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ABSTRACT

The objectives of this chapter are to examine social media and citizens' participation in elections in Nigeria's Fourth Republic; appraise social media and delivery of democratic dividends in Nigeria's Fourth Republic; and identify the relationship among social media, citizen participation in elections, and delivery of democratic dividends in Nigeria's Fourth Republic. The study was hinged on the social capital and democratic participant media theories and a review of relevant academic literature. The study finds that while social media facilitated citizen participation during elections in Nigeria's Fourth Republic, actual voter turnout was low. Also, the study shows that in spite of social media use by Nigerian citizens, democracy dividends are yet to be delivered to Nigerian citizens. And lastly, findings reveal that there appears to be a weak relationship between social media and citizens' participation in elections in Nigeria and that social media use by Nigerians has not delivered the dividends of democracy to the people.

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INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on the trilogical subjects of social media, citizens' participation in elections, and the proverbial dividends of democracy in Nigeria's Fourth Republic. It is important to point out that the media in Africa have been acknowledged for their roles in challenging fascist, monocratic, apartheid, or peremptory regimes; shaping democratic politics; and bolstering greater citizen participation in elections in various countries in the continent (Dantani, Wika, & Maigari, 2017; Duru, 2017; Falade, 2014; Imhonopi & Urim, 2004; Imhonopi, 2012; Iruonagbe, Imhonopi, & Ahmadu, 2013; Menocal, 2014; Muriungi, 2006; Oboh, 2016; Suntai & Targema, 2017; Chilwa, 2012; UNESCO, Ethiopia, & African Union, 2019). The media achieved these goals despite the, sometimes, deleterious macroclimate of repression in which they operate. For example, from the anti-colonial protests that shook the foundations of the colonial enterprise to bring about the independence of some African states; the anti-apartheid agitations; to the vanguard's role in contemporary African countries, the media continue to fight against repression by post-independent megalomaniacs who believe they are more significant than their nations (Iruonagbe, et al., 2013; Menocal, 2014; Muriungi, 2006; Oboh, 2016). Therefore, by informing, educating, sensitizing, and mobilizing the African society, the media, undeniably, play essential roles in the embedment of democratic culture and consciousness in the region (Chinedu-Okeke & Obi, 2016; Dantani et al., 2017; Gberevbie & Oviasogie, 2013; Mustapha, Gbonegun & Mustapha, 2016; Ndavula, & Mberia, 2012; Opeibi, 2019; Urim, Imhonopi & Ojukwu, 2013).

The media play visible roles during elections: shaping the edges of the democratic persona within nations. When the media are not seen to be doing so, they attract criticisms from citizens who have high expectations in their power to hold politicians and the government accountable to the people (Oboh, 2016; UNESCO, et al., 2019). Elections are instrumental in political leadership change and are also heavily influenced and driven by the media. The debouchment of social media changed the media space because it created options for ordinary citizens to participate. Social media have been found in developed and emerging economies to reshape the political landscape and narratives (Abdu, Alamai, Musa, & Halilu, 2018; Bello, Yusuf, Yusuf, & Akintola, 2017; Madueke, Nwosu, Ogbonnaya, Anumadu, & Okeke, 2017). Social media provided platforms for the political leverage that swept former American President Barack Obama into office. The *Arab Spring* was wound around social media use and led to the fall of despotic regimes in Tunisia and Egypt. The ongoing political activism in many African countries such as Senegal, Congo Brazzaville, Uganda, Nigeria, and others, are hastened because social media platforms give rooms for citizens to pass across messages that enable political participation and communication

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