

THE INFLUENCE OF X ON VOTER ENGAGEMENT AND CANDIDATE IMAGE BUILDING DURING THE 2024 EDO STATE GUBERNATORIAL ELECTIONS

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Abstract

The frequent use of social media in politics has transformed how voters connect with candidates and how candidates shape their image. The study aims to assess the extent to which X influenced voters' interest in the Edo gubernatorial elections. This research examines the role of X (formerly Twitter) in affecting voter participation and shaping the public perception of political candidates during the 2024 Edo State gubernatorial elections. The study employed a survey method, using a structured questionnaire to gather data from 400 respondents across three local government areas in Edo State: Esan West, Etsako East, and Etsako West. A simple percentage was used to analyse the findings. The results show that, although X provided a platform for political discourse, its impact on voter interest and engagement was limited. Many respondents did not actively follow political discussions or rely on X as their primary source of election-related information. Moreover, misinformation, online harassment, and internet access issues hampered its effectiveness in mobilising voters. While political candidates used X for self-promotion, traditional media remained the main channel for political engagement. The study concludes that, although X is part of modern political communication, its influence on voter behaviour in Edo State remains unclear. I recommend increasing political participation by educating citizens on how to verify information and engage positively online. Politicians should prioritise connecting with voters over mere self-promotion. False information should be tackled through fact-checking and establishing clear rules. Online discussions should be safe and inclusive, employing hashtags and live Q&As. Enhancing internet access and combining social media with traditional media can help reach a wider audience. Finally, further research is needed to understand how different groups in Edo State participate in online politics.

Keywords: Influence, Gubernatorial election, Social Media, Image building, Voter engagement, X (Twitter).

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INTRODUCTION

The rise of social media has transformed political communication, redefining how politicians engage with voters, influence public opinion, and shape their public image. Platforms such as X (formerly Twitter) have become strategic tools for directly reaching constituents, disseminating campaign messages, and influencing electoral outcomes (Olley et al., 2023). In contexts like Nigeria's multicultural political environment, such as during the 2024 Edo State gubernatorial elections, these platforms offer unique insights into voter engagement and candidate image-building. Politics, rooted in Aristotle's idea of an art of

governance for the “common good,” functions as a process of collective decision-making within governance structures like states and institutions. Elections form a central pillar of democratic politics, allowing citizens to choose leaders, influence public policies, and exercise civic rights (Heywood, 2019). Social media enhances this process by enabling direct, real-time interactions between candidates and voters, fostering inclusivity and responsiveness. As Olley & Ekharefo (2013) observe in their analysis of Nigeria's January 2012 anti-fuel subsidy protests, social media serves as a “people's power” tool, allowing citizens to express dissent, mobilise support, and influence political

agendas.

Scholarly evidence indicates that interactive political discussion on social platforms can boost political engagement, especially among younger groups and those previously disengaged (Boulianne, 2020). The viral nature of social media content extends campaign reach, while advanced targeting tools enable candidates to tailor messages for specific demographics, locations, or interests (Stier et al., 2018). However, these same platforms can also be used to spread misinformation aimed at discrediting opponents (Alegu et al., 2020).

In the Nigerian context, social media has developed since 2007 into an essential tool for political communication, facilitating two-way dialogue between politicians and citizens (Orji, 2014; Shadrach & Apuke, 2020). This participatory aspect not only enhances democratic engagement but also redefines the power dynamics between political actors and the electorate.

Statement of the Problem

Social media has transformed how people engage with politics, especially during elections. Among various platforms, social media sites like X (Twitter) enable political candidates and parties to communicate directly with a large audience (Shadrach & Apuke, 2020), share ideas, and shape their public image. However, we do not fully understand the extent to which X influenced voter engagement and candidate image-building during the 2024 Edo state gubernatorial elections.

Although politicians in Nigeria are using X more than before, concerns remain about its effectiveness in encouraging people to vote and influencing opinions. Most research on social media and Nigerian elections has concentrated on platforms like Facebook and WhatsApp, while X has received relatively little attention, particularly at the state level. Additionally, issues such as fake news, propaganda, and limited internet access raise questions about whether X supports democracy or exacerbates political divisions.

This study examines how X influenced voter participation, how candidates utilised it to shape their public image during the Edo State elections, and whether online campaigns on X encouraged real-life voting. It will also analyse how candidates managed their reputation on the platform and the implications for the future of Nigerian politics.

Objectives of the Study

1. To determine the extent to which X influenced voters' interest in the Edo gubernatorial elections.
2. To examine how politicians used X to promote themselves during the Edo gubernatorial elections.

3. To examine how politicians used X to shape their public image during the Edo gubernatorial elections.
4. To examine whether campaigns on X encourage people to vote.

Research Questions

The study will use the following research questions as its guide.

1. To what extent did X influence voter interest and participation in the 2024 Edo State gubernatorial elections?
2. How did political candidates use X to promote themselves and shape their public image?
3. What are the challenges politicians face while using X for their campaigns?
4. Did campaigns on X during the Edo gubernatorial election encourage people to vote in real life?

LITERATURE REVIEW

History of the Edo Gubernatorial elections

Edo State, which was created out of the old Bendel State on 27 August 1991, has experienced a dynamic political history marked by both military and civilian administrations.

1991 Gubernatorial Election

John Odigie Oyegun (Social Democratic Party - SDP) was governor from January 1992 to November 1993. He became the first civilian governor of Edo State following the 1991 elections. His administration was cut short by a military coup in November 1993.

2007 Gubernatorial Election

Oserheimen Osunbor (PDP) was governor from May 2007 to November 2008. Osunbor's election was challenged, and in November 2008, the court annulled the results, declaring Adams Oshiomhole of the Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN) as the rightful winner.

2012 Gubernatorial Election

Adams Oshiomhole (ACN - Action Congress of Nigeria) was Governor from November 2008 to November 2016. Following the court's decision, Oshiomhole assumed office in November 2008 and was re-elected in 2012, serving until 2016.

2016 Gubernatorial Election

Godwin Obaseki (All Progressives Congress - APC) was governor from November 2016 to November 2024. He won the 2016 election under the APC. Ahead of the 202 election, due to intra-party conflicts, he switched to the PDP and secured re-election.

2024 Gubernatorial Election

Monday Okpebholo (APC) is the current governor of Edo State as of 12 November 2024. He was elected governor in September 2024 and took office in November 2024, succeeding Godwin Obaseki.

Role of Media in Politics

The media remains a central player in political communication, influencing public perception, shaping policy debate, and holding government institutions accountable. Through agenda-setting, framing, and priming, the media determines which issues gain public attention and how they are understood. As McCombs and Shaw (1972) demonstrated, media outlets guide public priorities by emphasising specific topics, while Entman (1993) defined framing as the selective presentation of reality to influence interpretation. Priming, as described by Iyengar and Kinder (1987), further establishes the standards by which citizens evaluate political figures and events. Together, these processes highlight the media's role in defining political significance and shaping civic participation.

Beyond agenda-setting, the media acts as an educational platform for political socialisation, helping shape citizens' political knowledge, attitudes, and behaviours (Graber, 2001). However, ongoing debates about bias highlight its complex role, with some studies asserting a liberal bias within certain outlets (Groseclose & Milyo, 2005), while others argue that overall bias across media systems remains limited (D'Alessio & Allen, 2000). In Nigeria, journalists face significant challenges in maintaining credibility and independence, especially during elections. Orhewere and Olley (2023) observe that media practitioners often contend with political pressure, insufficient resources, and threats to their professional autonomy, factors that complicate balanced reporting during politically sensitive periods.

The rapid growth of social media has further changed news consumption habits and journalistic routines. Platforms like X (formerly Twitter) enable swift news sharing and direct audience engagement, but they also raise concerns about credibility and the risk of misinformation. Okosun et al. (2023) noted that users' perceptions of credibility on these platforms mainly depend on content authenticity, source verification, and platform transparency. This change has led to the rise of "news influencers" who shape political discourse, often bypassing traditional editorial oversight. Recent studies reveal that a significant part of the global audience now consumes political news via such influencers, with notable gender disparities in content creation and

distribution (Business Insider, 2024). In response to disinformation threats, governments and media organisations have introduced fact-checking initiatives and media literacy programmes (Time, 2024). However, as Nigeria's evolving media landscape demonstrates, maintaining trust and credibility in the digital age requires ongoing investment in journalistic integrity, media education, and regulatory reforms to uphold democratic communication standards.

Voters' engagement and political participation

Voter engagement and political participation are vital components of democratic governance, influencing electoral results and public policy choices. According to Verba, Scholzman, and Brady (1995), political participation includes a broad spectrum of activities such as voting, campaign involvement, and civic engagement, all of which are essential for democracy to function. However, voter turnout has exhibited notable disparities across various demographics. A recent study by the Institute for Public Policy Research (2025) highlights a drop in voter participation among renters and non-graduates in the UK, raising concerns about electoral legitimacy (The Guardian, 2025).

According to Onyewuchi et al. (2023), systemic corruption, limited political awareness, and economic difficulties are the main obstacles preventing young people in Nigeria from voting in elections (Twist Journal, 2023). Meanwhile, voter mobilisation has been revolutionised by internet platforms. In the same vein, Paharuddin (2022) stated that social media improves political conversation and makes information easily accessible, which ultimately influences how people vote (Mellbaou Journal, 2022).

Similarly, Michael et al. (2020) show that during Nigeria's 2019 general elections, young mobilisation was significantly supported by platforms such as Facebook and WhatsApp (Ianna Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies, 2020). Voter apathy persists despite these advancements. Obi et al. (2021) emphasise the need for electoral reforms and attribute Nigeria's declining participation to governance issues and weak institutional frameworks (UNJPE, 2021). Social media has transformed the way people engage with politics and has become one of the primary platforms for political discussions. It enables politicians, voters, and activists to share opinions, debate issues, and disseminate information about elections. This has facilitated greater participation in politics, particularly during elections.

One of the main ways X helps voter engagement is by providing instant access to political news and updates. People can follow

candidates, political parties, and news outlets to stay informed about campaign promises, election dates, and significant events. Instead of waiting for TV or Newspapers, voters can get real-time information at their fingertips.

Candidate Image Building in Elections

Candidate image building is a vital part of electoral campaigns, as it influences voter perceptions and election results. Rosenberg, Kahn, and Tran (1991) showed that strategic changes in a candidate's appearance can affect voter preferences, emphasising the importance of visual presentation in campaigns (Springer, 1991). Likewise, Barrett and Barrington (2005) discovered that newspaper photographs greatly influence voters' evaluations of candidates, shaping perceptions of personal traits and overall impressions (SAGE Journals, 2005).

In the digital era, Hultman, Ulusoy, and Oghazi (2019) highlighted the importance of social media in shaping a candidate's image, noting that effective online engagement strengthens voter-candidate relationships (White Rose, 2019). Additionally, Stier et al. (2018) argued that social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter provide candidates with the chance to build a personal brand, manage narratives, and interact directly with voters, all of which enhance public credibility and trust (New Media & Society, 2018). Because they enable controlled messaging and emotional appeal, television adverts remain a powerful tool for forming a candidate's image, according to Kaid (2004) (Routledge, 2004). Collectively, these studies demonstrate how candidate image construction is evolving and how both traditional and digital media are vital in shaping an engaging and electable political persona.

Social media plays a significant role in elections nowadays, and candidates use social media to shape their campaign agendas. They emphasise the issues they want the public to focus on and share their ideas for solving significant problems. Through posts, videos, and live updates, they ensure voters understand their positions. Occasionally, candidates encounter negative news, scandals, or false information, and they defend themselves before the situation escalates.

Theoretical Framework Agenda-Setting theory

This theory states that the media does not tell people what to think but rather what to think about. It means that the media influences public perception by deciding which issues are essential and should be discussed. It was proposed by Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw (1972). McCombs and Shaw developed this theory through

their study of the 1968 U.S. presidential election. They found that the topics most covered by the media were the same topics voters considered necessary. This suggests that media outlets (including social media) play a decisive role in shaping public opinion by emphasising specific issues over others. "In today's media ecology, digital platforms have transitioned from being mere communication tools to agenda-setting instruments that influence voter behaviour and candidate perception." (Ate, 2023).

In the context of the study, X functions as a modern agenda-setting tool where political candidates and parties promote specific narratives, emphasise key campaign promises, and influence voter discussions. Through tweets, hashtags, and trending topics, politicians shape which issues dominate public discourse during elections. For example, a candidate may repeatedly post about economic reforms, making it a major topic among voters, even if other issues are equally urgent.

Uses and Gratification theory

This theory explains how people deliberately seek out media to satisfy various needs such as information, entertainment, personal identity, and social contact. Unlike traditional media theories, which see audiences as passive consumers, this theory views individuals as active participants who choose media based on their interests and needs. Elihu Katz, Jay G. Blumler, and Michael Gurevitch proposed the hypothesis in 1973. According to this theory, different people use duplicate media content for various purposes. While some use media to be politically aware, others use it for amusement or social connection. This theory focuses more on the reasons for media consumption rather than its effects.

Voters use X to meet their needs, such as staying updated on elections, engaging in political discussions, and forming opinions about candidates, which is how my research connects to this concept. Conversely, politicians utilise X to communicate with voters, build their public image, and engage supporters. To maintain interest, a politician might, for example, post frequently, while voters may retweet or comment on posts to express their political views. Due to this mutual relationship, X is a vital platform for candidate branding and voter engagement.

Empirical Review

In recent years, researchers have shown a growing interest in investigating the influence of Twitter on political participation in Nigeria. "Twitter and Political Participation in Emerging Democracies: An Analysis of Nigeria's 18 Political Parties" (Sarah Chidiebere Joe, 2023).

This research examines how Nigeria's 18 registered political parties utilise Twitter for political communication. The research highlights that the People's Democratic Party (PDP) had the highest frequency of Twitter usage among the parties analysed. The study reveals that Twitter is primarily used as a promotional tool by these parties, with dominant discussions centred around the 2023 elections, presidential candidates, and national issues. The findings suggest that while Twitter serves as a platform for political promotion, its potential for interactive engagement with the electorate is underutilised.

“The Role of Twitter in Shaping Public Opinion During Election Periods in Nigeria” (Chinedu Okonkwo, Amina Yusuf, and Kemi Banjo, 2024). This study explores Twitter's impact on public opinion during Nigerian elections, focusing on its role in political engagement and activism. The study confirms Twitter's significant influence in these areas but also addresses challenges such as the spread of misinformation and the digital divide, which can limit its positive impact. The authors emphasise the need for collaborative efforts from various stakeholders, including government bodies, civil society, tech companies, and the platform itself, to improve digital literacy and access. Strategies must balance combating misinformation and expanding digital access while safeguarding freedom of expression and encouraging political participation. The future of Twitter in Nigerian elections hinges on overcoming these challenges to fully harness its potential as a tool for fostering a more informed and engaged electorate.

“Political Communication and the Digital Era: An Evaluation of the Influence of Twitter Use in Nigeria's 2023 Presidential Electioneering Campaign” by Eugenia Chinweokwu Eneome, Kingsley Chukwudubem, and Camilla Nkiru Emechebe (2023). This study assesses Twitter's impact during Nigeria's 2023 presidential election campaigns. It explores the significant relationship between Twitter use by political candidates and the mobilisation of political support and engagement. The research also considers whether Twitter enhances political campaigns by enabling active and meaningful interactions with voters. The findings demonstrate a notable link between Twitter use by candidates seeking elected positions and the mobilisation of support. The study concludes by emphasising Twitter's vital role in political communication, especially during elections, and recommends broader internet access and capacity building for all stakeholders in the internet sector.

“Undergraduate students' perception of social media and youth political participation in Nigeria's 2023 general elections,” by Olley, W. O., Akpor, E. D., & Anavberokhai, L. E. (2024). This study

investigates how Nigerian undergraduate students utilised social media platforms to engage in political activities during the 2023 general elections. The findings reveal that platforms like WhatsApp played a significant role in disseminating political information and mobilising youth participation. The research emphasises the transformative impact of social media on political engagement among young Nigerians, aligning with the principles of the Uses and Gratification theory, which explores how individuals actively seek out media that meet their specific needs.

“The Impact of Social Media on Political Mobilisation in Nigeria's 2019 Presidential Election” by Olusola Isola (2020). This research examines the impact of social media platforms, particularly Twitter, on political mobilisation during Nigeria's 2019 presidential election. It emphasises their role in shaping voter behaviour and engagement. The study finds that social media platforms were instrumental in disseminating information, organising political events, and engaging with voters, thereby influencing voter turnout and preferences.

Existing research on social media and politics mainly focuses on national elections, leaving a gap in understanding state-level elections, such as the 2024 Edo State gubernatorial election. There is limited insight into how X mobilised voters and shaped digital campaign strategies in Edo State. This study fills these gaps by analysing X's unique role in voter engagement and candidate image-building at the state level.

Methodology of the study

The respondents in this study are residents of Edo State who use X (formerly Twitter) and participated in the 2024 Edo Gubernatorial election. The targeted population is drawn from three local government areas in Edo State, based on statistics from the population chart, map, and 'city population'. Respondents were selected from residents of Esan West, Etsako East, and Etsako West. Esan West has a population of 188,700, Etsako East 217,700, and Etsako West 294,000. The primary data collection tool used is a structured questionnaire. Convenient sampling techniques were employed to administer the survey.

Analysis and Discussion of Findings

Research Question 1: To what extent did X influence voter interest and participation in the 2024 Edo State gubernatorial elections?

Table 1

Statements	Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Did you participate in the 2024 Edo state gubernatorial election	Yes	151	37.75%
	No	122	30.5%
	Not sure	127	31.75%
	Total	400	100%

I followed political discussions on X during the 2024 Edo state gubernatorial elections	Strongly agree	18	4.5%
	Agree	42	10.5%
	Neutral	61	15.25%
	Disagree	129	32.25%
	Strongly disagree	150	37.5%
Total	400	100%	
X played a key role in increasing voter awareness and participation.	Strongly agree	17	4.25%
	Agree	39	9.75%
	Neutral	63	15.75%
	Disagree	142	35.5%
	Strongly disagree	139	34.75%
Total	400	100%	
X helped me stay updated with real-time election news and candidate updates during the Edo state elections.	Strongly agree	19	4.75%
	Agree	40	10%
	Neutral	48	12%
	Disagree	141	35.25%
	Strongly disagree	152	38%
Total	400	100%	

Source: Field survey, 2025

The findings of the study, as shown in Table 2, display the frequencies and percentages of how X influenced voter interest and participation in the 2024 Edo gubernatorial Elections. Among the respondents, 151 (37.75%) took part in the elections, 127 (31.75%) were unsure, and 122 (30.5%) did not participate. A large portion of respondents strongly disagreed (150, 37.5%) or disagreed (129, 32.25%) with the following political discussions on X. Others remained neutral (61, 15.25%), agreed (42, 10.5%), or strongly agreed (18, 4.5%). Many respondents disagreed (142, 35.5%) or strongly disagreed (139, 34.75%) that X increased voter awareness. Others were neutral (63, 15.75%), agreed (39, 9.75%), or strongly agreed (17, 4.25%).

Most respondents either strongly disagreed (152, 38.0%) or disagreed (141, 35.25%) that they used X for real-time election news. Others remained neutral (48, 12.0%), agreed (40, 10.0%), or strongly agreed (19, 4.75%).

Research Question 2: How did political candidates use X to promote themselves and shape their public image?

Table 2

Statement	Responses	Frequency	Percentage
The candidate used X to defend themselves from negative attacks or misinformation.	Strongly agree	19	4.75%
	Agree	46	11.5%
	Neutral	57	14.25%
	Disagree	127	31.75%
	Strongly disagree	151	37.75%
Total	400	100%	
I came across fake news or misinformation about candidates on X.	Strongly agree	22	5.5%
	Agree	39	9.75%
	Neutral	63	15.75%
	Disagree	123	30.75%
	Strongly disagree	153	38.25%
Total	400	100%	
Political candidates use X to promote their achievements and campaign promises.	Strongly agree	19	4.75%
	Agree	37	9.25%
	Neutral	76	19%
	Disagree	126	31.5%
	Strongly disagree	142	35.5%
Total	400	100%	
X enabled candidates to connect with voters	Strongly agree	25	6.25%
	Agree	36	9%

more effectively than traditional media (TV, radio, newspapers).	Neutral	46	11.5%
	Disagree	143	35.75%
	Strongly disagree	150	37.5%
	Total	400	100%

Source: Field survey, 2025

The findings of the study, as presented in Table 3, show that respondents mostly strongly disagreed (151, 37.75%) or disagreed (127, 31.75%) that candidates used X to defend themselves against negative attacks and misinformation. Others were neutral (57, 14.25%), agreed (46, 11.5%), or strongly agreed (19, 4.75%). A large proportion of respondents strongly disagreed (153, 38.25%) or disagreed (123, 30.75%) with encountering fake news on X. Others were neutral (63, 15.75%), agreed (39, 9.75%), or strongly agreed (22, 5.5%).

Many respondents strongly disagreed (142, 35.5%) or disagreed (126, 31.5%) that candidates used X to promote their achievements. Some remained neutral (76, 19.0%), while a smaller number agreed (37, 9.25%) or strongly agreed (19, 4.75%). The majority of respondents strongly disagreed (150, 37.5%) or disagreed (143, 35.75%) that X helped candidates connect better than traditional media. Some were neutral (46, 11.5%), agreed (36, 9.0%), or strongly agreed (25, 6.25%).

Research Question 3: What are the challenges politicians face while using X for their campaigns?

Table 3

Statements	Responses	Frequency	Percentage
I used X to verify political news before sharing or believing it	Strongly agree	20	5%
	Agree	28	7%
	Neutral	67	16.75%
	Disagree	149	37.25%
	Strongly disagree	136	34%
Total	400	100%	
I noticed online harassment and negative campaigns targeting candidates on X	Strongly agree	19	4.75%
	Agree	44	11%
	Neutral	61	15.25%
	Disagree	134	33.5%
	Strongly disagree	142	35.5%
Total	400	100%	
The use of X for political campaigns is limited because not everyone has internet access.	Strongly agree	29	7.25%
	Agree	46	11.5%
	Neutral	52	13%
	Disagree	139	34.75%
	Strongly disagree	134	33.5%
Total	400	100%	

Source: Field survey, 2025

The results in Table 4 show that a majority of respondents disagreed (149, 37.25%) or strongly disagreed (136, 34.0%) that they used X to verify political news before sharing or believing it. The rest were neutral (67, 16.75%), agreed (28, 7.0%), or strongly agreed (20, 5.0%). Many respondents strongly disagreed (142, 35.5%) or disagreed (134, 33.5%) that they noticed online harassment on Twitter. Others were neutral (61, 15.25%), agreed (44, 11.0%), or strongly agreed (19, 4.75%). A

significant portion of respondents disagreed (139, 34.75%) or strongly disagreed (134, 33.5%) that Twitter usage is limited due to internet access issues. Some remained neutral (52, 13.0%), agreed (46, 11.5%), or strongly agreed (29, 7.25%).

Research Question 4: Did campaigns on X during the Edo gubernatorial election encourage people to vote in real life?

Table 4

Statement	Responses	Frequency	Percentage
The political content I saw on X influenced my interest during the Edo state election.	Strongly agree	23	5.75%
	Agree	31	7.75%
	Neutral	53	13.25%
	Disagree	140	35%
	Strongly disagree	153	38.25%
	Total	400	100%
Political campaigns on X encouraged me to vote during the elections.	Strongly agree	20	5%
	Agree	40	10%
	Neutral	62	15.5%
	Disagree	145	36.25%
	Strongly disagree	133	33.25%
	Total	400	100%
Did you change your choice of candidate during the course of the campaign? And was this decision influenced by X in any way?	Yes	133	33.25%
	No	130	32.5%
	Not sure	137	34.25%
	Total	400	100%

Source: Field survey, 2025

The results shown in Table 4 reveal that many respondents strongly disagreed (153, 38.25%) or disagreed (140, 35.0%) that political content on X affected their interest in politics. A smaller number remained neutral (53, 13.25%), agreed (31, 7.75%), or strongly agreed (23, 5.75%). Many respondents either disagreed (145, 36.25%) or strongly disagreed (133, 33.25%) that political campaigns on X motivated them to vote. A lesser proportion were neutral (62, 15.5%), agreed (40, 10.0%), or strongly agreed (20, 5.0%). A significant number of respondents were uncertain (137, 34.25%) whether X influenced their choice of candidate, while 133 (33.25%) stated it did, and 130 (32.5%) said it did not. These findings offer clear insights into the role of X in the Edo State gubernatorial elections within the selected local governments (Esan West, Etsako East, and Etsako West).

Discussion of Findings

Firstly, concerning the extent to which X influenced voters' interest and participation, the data shows that although many respondents had accounts on the platform, a majority did not perceive it as a strong influence on their political behaviour. Most respondents disagreed that X encouraged them to participate actively in political discussions or motivated them to vote during the election. This indicates that X's ability to stimulate voter interest and direct participation remains limited in the study area.

Secondly, regarding how politicians used X for self-promotion and image-building, the results showed that respondents did not strongly agree that candidates effectively utilised the platform to highlight their achievements or defend against attacks. While some exposure to campaign activities was recognised, the overall perception is that politicians did not fully exploit X to reach voters in these local governments.

Third, regarding the challenges of using X during campaigns, respondents expressed concerns such as fake news and online harassment. These problems erode trust in the platform as a dependable space for political engagement. The existence of such issues suggests that many voters approach information on X with scepticism, potentially diminishing its overall impact.

Overall, the findings suggest that although X offers a platform for political communication, its impact on voter awareness, engagement, and decision-making in the studied local governments of Edo State remains limited. Traditional media and face-to-face interactions still play a more prominent role in shaping voter perspectives.

Conclusion

This study revealed the influence of X (formerly Twitter) on voter engagement and candidate image-building during the 2024 Edo State gubernatorial elections. Findings suggest that while X provided a platform for political communication, its impact on voter participation and candidate perception was minimal. Many respondents did not actively engage with political content on X, and its role in mobilising voters remained uncertain.

Issues such as misinformation, online harassment, and restricted internet access hindered its effectiveness. While social media remains a political tool, traditional press and offline political engagement continue to play a more dominant role in shaping electoral outcomes in Edo State.

Recommendations

To enhance X for political engagement and voter awareness in Edo state, many improvements are necessary.

1. Firstly, the people of Edo state should be educated on how to verify news and engage in meaningful discussions on social media. Politicians should communicate more effectively by interacting directly with voters, rather than just promoting their public image on social media platforms. Misinformation remains a significant problem, so fact-checking and stricter guidelines should be implemented to prevent the spread of fake news.
2. Encouraging meaningful discussions

through hashtags and live Q&A sessions can also help more people become involved. Online harassment must be tackled by enforcing stronger guidelines to create a safer environment for political conversations. Since internet access remains a challenge for some, there should be more efforts to improve accessibility so that a larger number of people can participate.

3. Both social media and traditional media, such as TV and radio, can reach a larger audience.
4. Finally, further research is needed to understand how different groups engage with political content online, which can assist in improving social media campaigns in Edo State in the future.

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