Vol. 2, No. 1, 2026 - Kwararafa University Journal of Multidisciplinary Research and Innovation
Pub. Link: https://aa.unij.co.uk/index.php/kujmri/issue/view/6 - E- ISSN: 3156-5492 | P- ISSN: 3156-5514

Comparative Assessment of Conventional and Digital Media Influence on Nigerian Voters' Behaviour During the 2023 Presidential Election in South Western Nigeria

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DOI : https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.22902150

Abstract

*Mass media paly important role in a democracy as viable sources of information dissemination. But the perceived shift in media influence on political communication from the conventional media to the digital media calls for intellectual inquiry to ascertain whether the proliferation of digital media platforms (X, Facebook and WhatsApp etc.) and subsequent use for political engagements has challenged and altered the dominant influence of conventional platforms (radio, television and newspaper) on electoral behaviour This study interrogates which of the two forms of media- conventional or digital exerts a higher influence on voters' behaviour in the 2023 presidential election in Nigeria. The study adopted mixed methods: survey and in-depth interview with 397 respondents and 14 interviewees drawn from six local government areas of Lagos and Oyo states. Findings show that media have minimal but joint significant influence on the voters' behaviour, but conventional media platforms emerged to have influenced the behaviour exhibited by voters during the 2023 Presidential Election better than digital media. R*adio particularly emerged as the most effective. *The study recommendedstrong institutional frameworks to strengthen digital media against abuse. It also advocates that conventional media organizations should further fortify its gate keeping procedure against reputational damage.*

Key words: Digital, Conventional, Media, Presidential Election, Influence,

Introduction

Over the years, scholars have conceptualised media, generally as channels of communication that fussed the world into a single unit (Paul & Rai, 2021). Media simply connote the modern methods of transmitting news, opinion, education, entertainment and mechanism to set agenda for numbers of public (Onuoha, 2021). By its power and influence, media are the determinant and chief interpreters of human life (Hanson, 2022).

Asemah (2020) opines that the mass media may be seen from their functional angle which made people to see media as the society's watchdog, willing to raise concerns in the face of any infraction or abuse. To that extent, media are beacon or flash light bringing to the public what many would prefer to remain hidden. However, Manning, (2014) is of the view that the media

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could be seen from two main perspectives or ages- the broadcast and interactive age. The former represents the age of conventional media, which includes radio, television and print family, mostly newspapers. While the latter stands for era where interactivity was elevated, and popularly known as digital or new media age. Digital media, according to Jungherr, et al., (2020) is an infrastructure which is used to produce and distribute messages and ideas encoded in binary code.

In the view of Ibietan (2023), new media represent a broader spectrum of digital platforms, though often used interchangeably. Ibietan (2023) notes that new media represents the totality of digitally inclined communication that has Internet as its main conduit, the scholar reasoned that social media platforms are a component of new/digital media, but argued that all digital media are not social media, which implies that sociality and interactivity are key defining features of social media- translating to suggest that users are the ones who create values for social media platforms (Valentini & Kruckeberg, 2012).

The concept of digital media in this study includes three major platforms- Facebook, X, formally known as Twitter and WhatsApp. The justification for this position is premised on the findings of Namo, et al., (2024) who held that social media platforms like Facebook, WhatsApp and X (Twitter) are the most utilised social media platforms among Nigerian for political communication.

Whether under broadcast or interactive age, the platforms are generally categorised as media, with cardinal functions as encapsulated by Harol Lasswell (Asemah, 2020). Lasswell in 1948 stated that media performed certain cardinal functions to its audience and society, they include surveillance, correlation, entertainment, and cultural transmission. Lasswell, (1948) as cited in Mohd-Sharif (n.d.) opines that surveillance function suggests that mass communication prevails to inform and observe the public. Therefore, in a democratic setting, that has election as the key process, media have the role to uphold the function of informing members of the public about political activities (Kulachai, et al., 2023). In performing this role, Seibure and Javombo, (2021) aver that media bring to the fore various happenings and developments of an election campaign, giving key players platforms to get their messages to the people.

Before now, these functions were exclusive preserve of conventional media, whereas, in the current era, digital media platforms are altering the dynamics- platforms like X, Facebook and WhatsApp have developed into powerful political communication tools. To this end, the portrayal of the key political actors or their messages and actions by the media can profoundly alter public perceptions and attitudes (Serapşah & Sevgihan, 2023). Although, Usigbe (2023) argued that the role played by the media in influencing election results is generally quite small and negligible. Accordingly, careful analysis of the influence each of the two forms of media is the focus of this paper, this is necessary because notwithstanding the growing nature of digital community in Nigeria, particularly, the perceived increased youthful participation in politics, many of previous studies on the influence of media on voters' behaviour in election (Aririguzoh, 2021; Aririguzoh, 2014; Aliyu & Olowu, 2019; Hanson, 2022; Kulachai, et al., 2023; Dazang, 2022; Fujiwara et al. 2023) have been largely preemptive.

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By querying the interplay between digital and conventional media and their effects on voters' behaviour, this paper laid bare insights into the evolving dynamics of political communication and media influence in contemporary Nigerian democracy. The research sought to answer the following questions.

1. What is the influence of conventional and digital media on voters' behaviour during the 2023 Presidential Election?
2. Which media platform between conventional and digital has higher influence on voter's behaviour during the 2023 Presidential Election?

Literature Review

Conventional Media

Conventional media known as traditional media have been used to disseminate information to members of the public before the emergence of the Internet driven platforms. They include newspaper, magazine, radio and television. (Mittal & Mittal, 2013). Conventional media according to Pratama, et al., (2023) had existed for many decades, they, are often regarded as legacy media, they are predominant and main source of mass communication channels that have existed before the advent of new media. they are divided into two families of print (newspaper and magazine and the broadcast (radio and television). Pratama, et al., (2023) stressed that conventional mass media can exercise some level of control over the production and distribution of its content.

Zhang, (2012) sees conventional media as the medium, which utilizes one-way communication with the audience, conventional media is made up of four media sectors including publishing, radio, film, and television. In so far conventional media takes the form of a one-way communication, it attracts plenty of professionals who create media content for the audience. Pratama, et al., (2023) further explained that among the features of this family of media is its ability to disseminate information to mass audience with jointly and widely dispersed audience in a fairly short time. Similarly, Agbanu (2021) observes that conventional media can be seen from the two main divisions- print and electronic, while newspaper and magazine fall into print, radio and television belong to the electronic media.

Digital Media

This is the 21st Century technology that promotes interactivity among the users. According to Alao and Olayinka (2018), digital media encompasses a wide array of formats, including videos, articles, podcasts, virtual reality, and more, accessible through devices like computers, smartphones, and tablets. The digital age began in the late 20th Century, with the Internet transforming media consumption, making digital communication integral to daily life. Digital media according Jungherr (2020) refers to institutions and mechanisms that produce and circulate information encoded in binary code. Lindgren as cited in Muswede (2022) opines that digital media is a 21st-century expression that defines all communication engagements that related to the internet, it also captures the relationship between technology, images, texts and sound in the context of information production and circulation. Gdnet Research Communication (2011) notes digital that media which is also being referred to as new media as an area of startling growth in

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Africa, which has seen people accessing and disseminating information in ways that were inconceivable a decade ago.

Furthermore, in the view of Alessandro and Adam (2019), digital media encompasses a wide range of technologies capable of facilitating various human activities, extending beyond traditional communication practices including personal computers, mobile devices such as smartphones and tablets, digital cameras, video game consoles among others. according to Rengim (2019), digital media digitised content that can be transmitted over the internet or computer networks. This can include text, audio, video, and graphics. The line of difference between digital, new and social media is blurred, often, one is used interchangeably, however, Valentini and Kruckeberg (2012) asserts that in the current media landscape, digital media channels rely on the framework or structure provided by web2.0, 3.0 mobile communications, computer-aided user gadgets. In this media landscape the term used to represent all technology-based environment that promotes networking, interactive engagements, multimedia and collaboration is digital media. (Scolari, 2009, as cited in Valentini & Kruckeberg, 2012).

Valentini and Kruckeberg (2012) specifically argue that the prefix "new" refers to those technologies that recently emerged, in particular digital technologies. "New" also defines novel applications as well as the technologies that allow original, innovative ways of performing new tasks. the term "new media" should be used to represent technological innovation or in the sphere of information and communication advancements, suggesting that the dissimilarity between the concept of new and social media lies in the network effect, thus, to create value, social media needs network effect, but such is not needed in new media (Penn, 2021)

What this suggests is that new or digital media can be used interchangeably, whereas, social media channels emanated from the format of digital world, meaning that not all digital media are social media, part of the defining features of social media is its interactivity because it does not exist without users (Ibietan, 2023, Valentini & Kruckeberg, 2012)). Therefore, social media usage are platforms that allow users to interact with one another at the virtual space.

Voters' Behaviour

The concept of voter's behaviour is no doubt a wide and complex one. Halidu and Nwosu (2023) conceptualised voter's behaviour as the manner in which electorate choose to behave before the election day and after the election day within and outside the voting area within an electoral context in a political system. The scholars posited further that voter's behaviour may also mean the rationality that shapes the conduct and attitude of an electorate towards a particular electoral process. Kaur (2021) even evinced that voter's behaviour as a concept now used to describe wider political phenomena that were not previously conceived. Accordingly, behaviour during election should not be seen from the narrow standpoint of statistics of voting, records and counting of changes in electoral contests. but encompasses attempt to dissect voter's psychological processes and its connection or association with political actions. According to Kaur (2021), while relying on the authority of Plano and Riggs, voter's behaviour is a body of study relating to how people tend to vote in public elections and the reasons why they vote the way they do.

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In all of the attitude that may be displayed by a voter, it is safe to argue that voting is the most important with far reaching impact in the final outcome of an election, even though the right not to participate is part of the behaviour. Kumar and Kumar (2022) in their analysis of the factors affecting voting behaviour of urban voters and role of media in influencing the voters, did not only examine people who voted but also examined why did some electorate chose not to vote, implying that to vote and to choose otherwise are part of the behaviour of voters in an election.

Media Influence on Election

From advanced democracies to the nascent ones, mass media have been functioning as partners in the democratic endeavours across the globe. Aghamelu (2014) recognises roles of mass media in electoral process chiefly because of its unlimited communication strength and outreach. The pivotal roles of mass media especially television, in shaping opinion and thoughts towards candidates and parties is evinced by Adanlawo and Reddy (2020), thus relationship between election and media in the world today appears inseparable, because elections continue to be focal point of intense media attention and coverage (Najeem & Agboluaje, 2023).

In essence, Chomsky, cited in Nasidi (2022) captured the influence of media on election when the scholar holds that those who control the media, control the minds of the public. Mass media remains valuable institution in democracy across different societies, because it is a major source of information, education and awareness which are essential to healthy democracy, spotlighting the activities of people in government to live up to their oath of offices (Centre for Democratic Governance, 2009 cited in Najeem & Agboluaje, 2023).

In Nigeria the roles of media in political activities extend to campaigns for votes by political parties and candidates rely on radio, television, social media, handbill or even phone messages to engage electorates. Today, politics is generally being practised and reported on the belief that skillful media presentation is important to success in all normal circumstances (McQuail, 2010). Media perform fundamental roles in election across the world, because media is what many scholars have established as the source of oxygen to electoral or democratic activities. According to Asemah, (2020), the press ignites public conscience by placing on the front burner issues and concerns of public interest. It also sets agenda for the public. As agent of public opinion, it elevates sentiment of members of the public on a subject matter, considered worthy by the most informed, intelligent and morally upright persons in the community. While the success of an election is dependent on the conduct of electoral umpire and other key players, the elementary role of the media in electoral process, such as enlightenment and education of the members of the public as well as acting as impartial umpire is no less important (Cairo Institute for Human Right Studies, 2011 cited in Aliyu &Olowu, 2015).

In recent years, the global landscape of political communication has undergone a transformative shift with the advent and proliferation of online platforms. Nigeria, a country known for its dynamic political environment, has not been immune to this trend. Social media networks such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Tiktok and WhatsApp have gained widespread popularity and have become instrumental in facilitating political discourse (Fisher, et al., 2023). Moreso, Nnaane (2023) had established a strong correlation between the use of social media for political mobilisation and the choice being made by electorate in Nigeria. Fisher, et al., (2023) stressed that online platforms have democratised access to information and news, enabling a more diverse

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range of voices to participate in political conversations. This offers citizens real-time updates, analyses, and opinions from various sources, thereby challenging the dominance of traditional media.

Theoretical Framework

Medium theory

Medium theory stands as an exploration of the influences of communication technologies in addition to and from the specific content (messages) they convey. The assumptions underpinning the theory assert that media should not be limited to channels of information transmission, but what they themselves represent (Meyrowitz, 2008). The referenced scholar here, posits that medium theory's emphasis is on the features and characteristics of each medium, which makes it markedly (physically, socially, and psychologically) different from other media. The crux of the assumptions underpinning medium theory according to McLuhan (1964) referenced in Asemah et al., (2017) holds that channels of communication differ, not in terms of their contents but in regards to how they alter thoughts. Asemah et al. (2020) and Asemah et al. (2017) emphasised that medium theory lays emphasis on the features of a medium itself, not necessarily the message it conveys. Meyrowitz (2008) further the explanation by arguing that medium theory tries to explore the influences of such characteristics as the type of sensory information the medium is capable or unable to transmit, the level of immediacy of communication through the medium; whether the medium affords unidirectional or bidirectional, or better still, multidirectional communication; whether interaction through the medium is simultaneous or sequential. The theory sees these features as determinants of each medium and the responses that arises to the same content when exposed to from another media.

The relevant of the theory lies in what each of the media of communication under review represents before the voters, from their physical feature to the level of trust and credibility voters place on them (conventional and digital) media as sources for political discourses, as well as their perception or understanding of what each of the two forms of media represents in the minds of voters, particularly as related to credibility and believability of their contents in relating to the 2023 presidential election discourses. This belief-system is no doubt a key determinant in understanding whether electoral related information coming from any of the two formats of media shaped the behaviour of the voters differently, which is the focus of this study.

Method

Mixed method which combined qualitative and quantitative approaches were deployed in this study, specifically, Survey and in-depth interview were adopted as methods of data collection in the two states of Lagos and Oyo. They were chosen due to their cosmopolitan nature. Particularly, Lagos was one of the battle grounds in the 2023 presidential election and Oyo state is the political headquarters of western Nigeria. Registered voters who collected their permanent voter's cards before the 2023 presidential election formed the population of the study. As contained in the data of the Independent National Electoral Commission, INEC, eight million, nine hundred and seventy-six thousand, three hundred and ninety-one (8, 976, 391) collected their PVCs in the two states.

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A sample size of 405, was taken with the deployment of Chi-square's software and after the administration of the data collection instrument, 397 copies of questionnaire were considered to have been validly filled and adopted as the final sample size. In administering the questionnaire each state was stratified into three constitutional senatorial districts. One local government was randomly selected from list of local government areas in each of the districts, this was replicated at ward level with one ward randomly selected from the list of wards in the local government selected, making the number of the wards to be six. Questionnaire was purposively administered to respondents who have moderate literacy ability to understand the subject matter.

Participants in the qualitative data were drawn from the sample of the quantitative, this was done with their consent sought and gotten. Point of saturation was used to stop at 14th interviewee. Thereafter, descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyse the quantitative data through the use of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). While qualitative data were analysed thematically with help of Atlas.ti software.

Findings

Research Question 1.

What is the influence of media (conventional and digital) on voters' behaviour during the 2023 presidential election.?

This section presents results on influence of conventional and digital media on voters' behaviour during the 2023 Presidential Election. Respondents were asked to assess various factors that influenced their behaviour in the election, and the strength of media, being one of the factors were measured alongside others.

Table 1. Factors influencing voters' behavior during the 2023 presidential election

SN	Items	Response	F (n = 397)	%	x̄
1	Media messages on (radio, television, newspapers, X, Facebook and WhatsApp) influenced my voting behaviour during the 2023 presidential election.	Strongly disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly agree	64 55 50 117 111	16.1 13.9 12.6 29.5 28	3.92
2	Interpersonal conversations with family, friends, political stakeholders and community members played major role in shaping my voting behavior during the 2023 presidential election.	Strongly disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly agree	22 57 67 121 130	5.5 14.4 16.9 30.5 32.7	3.71
3	The political campaigns and rallies, debates I watched shaped significantly my behaviour on my choice of candidate in the 2023 presidential election.	Strongly disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly agree	55 86 59 118 79	13.9 21.7 14.9 29.7 19.9	3.20

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4	My socio-economic status, such as my educational background and occupation, influenced my voting behaviour in the 2023 presidential election.	Strongly disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly agree	44 54 55 108 136	11.1 13.6 13.9 27.2 34.3	3.60
5	The choice of presidential candidates influenced my voting behaviour in the 2023 presidential election.	Strongly disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly agree	21 36 46 130 164	5.3 9.1 11.6 32.7 41.3	3.96
6	My religious belief influenced my voting behaviour in 2023 presidential election.	Strongly disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly agree	57 115 92 62 71	14.4 29 23.2 15.6 17.9	2.94

Majority of the respondents note that the choice of presidential candidates by political parties influenced their behaviour more, precisely their voting behaviour in the election. This accounts for the highest mean score (M = 3.96), implying that more of the respondents' attitudes were shaped by the quality or credentials various presidential candidates. The result also showed that more of the respondents (57.5 %) agreed that media messages on (radio, television, newspapers, X, Facebook and WhatsApp) shaped their voting behaviour during the 2023 presidential election.

Table 2: Linear regression analysis summary table on the factors influencing voters' behaviour

Predictors	**B**	**T**	**P**	**R**	**R^2**	**F**	**P**
Media effectiveness	.13	2.66	< .05	.13	.02	7.06	< .05

Table 2 To be able to able to identify and recognise media influence, a linear regression analysis was run to present further inferential statistics on the influence of media on voters' behaviour. It reveals that media effectiveness had significant influence on voters' behaviour [R = .13; R^2 = .02; F (1, 395) = 7.06; p < .01]. Although, such effectiveness accounted for about 2% variance in voters' behaviour.

From the qualitative data, a wide range of sub-themes were thrown up by respondents that took part in the interview sessions. but media appear as the dominant theme based on the cumulative distribution of the responses. Out of the fourteen respondents, eleven of them responded that media has some modicum of influence on voting behaviour and decision they took in an election. Five themes that were identified from the qualitatively data gathered are captured in

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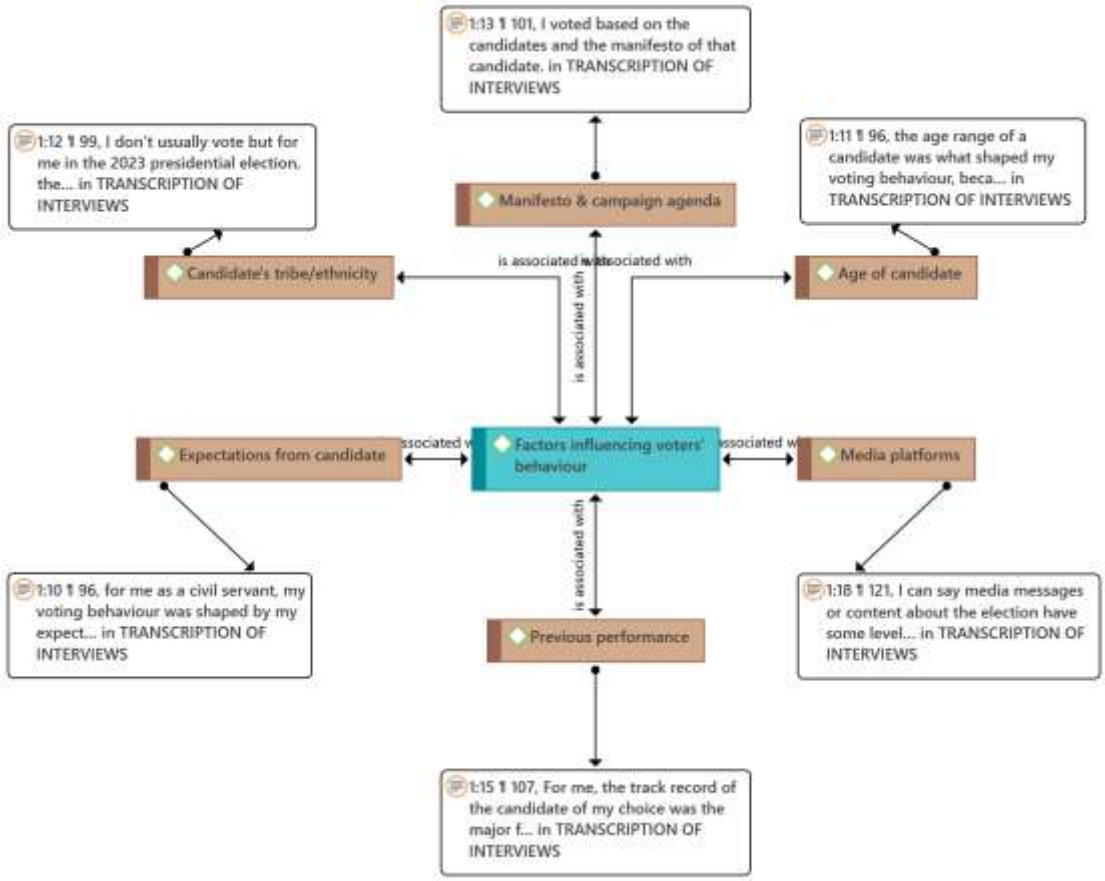
Figure 1: Factors influenced voters' behaviour in an election



Previous Performance

One of the identified factors that some participants considered as determinant of their behaviour was the track record and previous performance of the candidate. Sample excerpts below;

> *"...First and foremost is the candidate, the candidate chosen by the political party actually shaped my behavior in the election, take for instance, what they have done in the past matters…" (Respondent 13)*
>
> *Other respondents including Respondent 10, and 7 maintained same position on the choice of candidate.*

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Manifesto and campaign agenda/expectations

Another factor identified that influenced the voters' behaviour was the manifesto and campaign agenda. Among the excerpts of respondents are captured here:

> *"...I voted based on the candidates and the manifesto of that candidate." (Respondent 3)*

> *"...campaign agenda for people's benefits by the candidates." (Respondent 4)*

Candidate's Demographics (tribe/ethnicity/religion and age)

In addition, candidate's tribe/ethnicity and age was identified as one of the factors that influence the voters' behaviour. Some of the participants excerpts are presented below:

> *"...Secondly, there is no way ethnicity colouration will not be involved, why I said that is that it is the north that has been at the helms of affair for long, so everyone wants things to change, by making sure that power is ceded to the south, so this attracted ethnic colouration." (Respondent 10).*

> *"...Factor shaping my voting behavior are as follows: religious belief on leadership selection..." (Respondent 4)*

Another participant indicated that he/she voted for the youngest participant:

> *"...the age range of a candidate was what shaped my voting behaviour, because I voted for candidate with younger age range." (Respondent 1).*

Media as a factor

Some of the participants indicated that the media was instrumental in providing information and schedules to citizens, starting from the registration and getting of permanent voters' card and voting on election day; excerpts from respondents are captured as follow:

> *"...Yes, media content influenced my voting decision and perception of the candidates. The coverage on TV and radio provided insights into the candidates' policies, leadership styles, and debates, which helped shape my opinion and informed my voting choice." (Respondent 5)*

> *"...I want believe media content has some level of influence because we got to know more about some of the candidates through the media, (Respondent 7)*

But a very important twist was added to the findings by those who rated media factor of influence on the voters. They insisted that media influence was limited to undecided voters. Indicating that influence of media is still minimal on voters in election. few of the respondents held that;

> *"....so media has influence. If it is on political sphere, that's influence on those ones that are indecisive. Those that are indecisive. Yes, they are neutral. They don't really know which and what to go for, which side to go to. But for people*

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like us that, you know, we don't follow the trend, we follow the background of our candidate." (Respondent 12)

Again, another respondent sounded this way:

"...For people who don't have a mind of their own, media content can have a role in their decision making. but it doesn't mean that I cannot be swayed by media. For example, if I've been having admiration for a particular candidate, and that is emphasized by media content that agrees with what I already have in mind. I will not say media contents don't have influence on my decision, but because, by my nature, I think I should know a piece of information that's not correct, if I see one." (Respondent 11).

Research Question 2:

Which media platform between conventional and digital has higher influence on voter's behaviour during the presidential election.?

The table below presents results on the perceived influence of conventional media (TV, radio & newspapers) versus digital media (X, Facebook and WhatsApp) on voters' behaviour, identifying which platform played a more significant role in shaping voting decisions.

Table 3. Comparative assessment of influence of conventional and digital media on voters' behaviour

Platform	Response	F (n = 397)	%
Television	Very ineffective	67	16.9
	Ineffective	34	8.6
	Slightly effective	43	10.8
	Effective	110	27.7
	Very effective	143	36
Radio	Very ineffective	23	5.8
	Ineffective	16	4
	Slightly effective	59	14.9
	Effective	144	36.3
	Very effective	155	39
Newspaper	Very ineffective	51	12.8
	Ineffective	33	8.3
	Slightly effective	119	30
	Effective	116	29.2
	Very effective	78	19.6

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X(twitter)	Very ineffective	92	23.2
	Ineffective	75	18.9
	Slightly effective	94	23.7
	Effective	72	18.1
	Very effective	64	16.1
Facebook	Very ineffective	45	11.3
	Ineffective	70	17.6
	Slightly effective	124	31.2
	Effective	86	21.7
	Very effective	72	18.1
WhatsApp	Very ineffective	82	20.7
	Ineffective	64	16.1
	Slightly effective	111	28
	Effective	80	20.2
	Very effective	60	15.1

The above presents result on the effectiveness of various media platforms in the political decisions and eventual voters' behaviour during the 2023 presidential election in Nigeria, an overwhelming proportion of the respondents 75.3% indicated that the radio was effective and very effective in the influencing their political decision-making process. Similarly, majority of the respondents 63.7% indicated that the TV was effective and very effective in influencing their political decision-making process. However, this outcome contracted responses obtained under X, (twitter), Facebook and WhatsApp.

Table 4: Multiple regression analysis summary table on the perceived influence of media platforms on voters' behaviour

Predictors	**B**	**T**	**P**	**R**	**R^2**	**F**	**P**
				.21	.04	2.99	< .05
Television	.10	1.86	> .05				
Radio	-.14	-2.48	< .05				
Newspaper	.10	1.67	> .05				
X (twitter)	-.04	-.62	> .05				
Facebook	.11	1.62	> .05				
WhatsApp	-.00	-.04	> .05				

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To ascertain the strength of each media platform, multiple regression analysis was run.

And it shows that media platforms had joint significant influence on the voters' behaviour of respondents [R = .21; R^2 = .04; F (6, 390) = 2.99; p < .05]. However, only radio (β = -.14; t = -2.48; p < .05) had significant independent influence on the voting behaviour of respondents.

From the qualitative data, ten (10) out of the fourteen (14) respondents interviewed confirmed that conventional media has the greatest influence on them and behaviour they exhibited during the poll, this was largely because of trust and strong editorial integrity conventional media platforms enjoy. Excerpts from the respondents buttressing this position include the following:

> *"I think conventional media, particularly; radio has the highest influence." (Respondent 2)*
>
> *"…The media with highest influence on voters is conventional media. It is because it carries heavy and reliable information to the voters than that of Digital media." (Respondent 4)*
>
> *"…I think conventional media, such as TV and radio, had the highest influence on voters during the election. This is because they are more widely accessible, trusted, and provided more in-depth coverage of the election" (Respondent 5)*

Other respondents who expressed similar views include Respondent 6, 12, and 13. However, a few respondents still hold on to digital media as the most influential in the decision they took during the poll:

> "*….I will say digital has higher influence. We get information on digital media in minutes, especially X, every second, we got information, making information to be at everyone's fingertip." (Respondent 10).*

Discussion of Findings

This study was anchored on two main objectives The first objective of the study aimed at finding out the influence of both digital and conventional medial on voters' behaviour during the 2023 presidential election. The data revealed a large spectrum of factors that shaped behaviour of voters in the election, among which include choice of presidential candidate. (75%). Interpersonal conversations with acquittances and candidates' demographics. Next to this factor was the media influence. Linear regression analysis further shows that media truly does influence voters; behaviour, but a little- [R = .13; means that there is influence between media messages on election and behaviour exhibited by voters. The p < .01implies that the influence of media and voters' behaviour is statistically significant.

Qualitative data on the same objective reveals almost same trend. Although all the factors (political party's choice of candidate, social economic status of voters, tribe/ethnicity/religion consideration and media) were recognised as source of influence by those participated in the interview sessions, media came out noticeable, but only to undecided voters.

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The finding here aligns with many previous studies that recognised media as a factor shaping political activism, engagement and ultimately shaping behaviour of voters in an election. Olowojolu (2016) notes that through its agenda setting function, media influenced the election results to the advantage of the opposition candidate, General Muhammudu Buhari (retd) during the 2015 presidential election conducted in Nigeria. This is not far from other extant findings that confirmed media as a factor shaping voters' behaviour. Serapşah and Sevgihan (2023)'s finding also amplified this position that media is a source of influence on voters' behaviour through dissemination of political messages. Furthermore, the finding is equally corroborated by another study conducted by Damptey and Akparep (2022) which investigated influence of media on voting behaviour in western north region of Ghana. In it, Damptey and Akparep (2022) found out that media influenced the voting behaviour in the 2020 general elections in the region. Besides, this outcome resonates with result of Kulachai et al. (2023), which identified a wide range of factors that shaped voters' behaviour, including media.

Additionally, the minimal or limited nature of media influence resonates with what Ibietan (2023) reported, when the scholar examined influence of media on voting behaviour of Nigerian in 2015 presidential election. Ibietan confirmed that media only accounts for 6.2%, whereas, other factors, especially, informal engagements with social media influential and political stakeholders commanded higher degree of influence on voting behaviour among Nigerian voters.

The second objective of the study is to compare the perceived influence of conventional with digital media messages on the voters' behaviour during the 2023 presidential election, ultimately. As shown by the percentage and frequent table distribution of respondents, an overwhelming majority of the respondents (75.3%) rated radio as the most effective in influencing their political decision-making process during the election. this was followed by television which garnered 63.7%. Again, another conventional platform- newspaper was rated as effective in influencing voters' behaviour by 48.8 %. On digital media platforms, X, formally twitter came a little distance with 39.8% of effective and very effective source of influence on voters' behaviour during the election. this was followed by other digital platforms.

Qualitative data also resonate with this finding, where, out of the fourteen (14) interviewees, ten (10) confirmed that conventional media platforms, particularly, radio and television had the greatest influence on them and their behaviour during the 2023 presidential election in Nigeria, largely because of the trust the mediums enjoyed. The trend here reinforces many previous studies, such as Waseem and Shabir (2017)'s findings in Pakistan, which showed that conventional media (television) was the prime source of information as well as significant in shaping political behaviors of youth. The result also corroborates other studies such as Nwachukwu (2023), who investigated the influence of promotional efforts from radio on the voting pattern of rural residents in Lagos state. Findings show that radio aids political participation by motivating citizens to vote and be present for manifesto reading, unbiased in their choice of candidates. Similarly, the outcome of this study aligns with what Arede and Oji (2022) discovered in their study that examined the influence of radio broadcasting on political participation among people of south-south Nigeria. where findings reaffirmed a strong link between radio broadcast and behaviour of south-south peoples towards political activities.

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In the regression analysis that provided a deeper picture, radio, a conventional media platform came out as the only medium with a fair degree of influence on voters' behaviour. Although, respondents perceived radio as influential, the result of regression analysis says that the independent effect of radio on voters' behaviour was weak and negative, reflecting a perception-reality gap.

Conversely, none of the digital media platforms measured (X, Facebook, WhatsApp) showed noticeable statistical influence, which suggests in comparative terms, that conventional media, specifically, radio, still commands more influence than digital media in shaping voter behaviour. The result resonates with Gayo-Avello et al., (2023)'s position. The scholars had reasoned that over the years, the idea of predicting elections with social media is highly enticing but results remain elusive, suggesting that social media popularity may after all, not translate into reality of political victory through fidelity of behaviour by voters. Moreover, the rationale for the outcome here might not be unconnected with findings of Onyebuchi et al., (2016), who came to a conclusion in their study that traditional media platforms use to have more acclaim campaign messages than attack messages, whereas, social media platforms accommodated more attack campaigns than traditional media in an election.

Conclusion and Recommendation

The study attempted to understand the influence of media alongside other factors that shaped voters' behaviour in the 2023 presidential election. It also identified which of the two forms of media (digital or conventional) commands higher influence. it is therefore clear that media still influence the way voters behave in an election, though very minimal. Besides, radio continues to remain a force to reckon with above other channels of mass communication as the most preferred and accessible medium for political engagement, followed by television. It can therefore be concluded that conventional media- such as radio, television and newspaper influence voters better than digital media platforms (X, Facebook and WhatsApp). Although, the study is confronted with some limitations, particularly, the use of purposive sampling method to administer data collection instrument, this, no doubt affects the generalisability of its findings beyond the subjects of the study. Nevertheless, the use of interview to support survey has strengthened it substantially. From the foregoing, the study recommended that since media still enjoys some level of influence on voters' behaviour, it thus beholds on media to spotlight political activities for effective participation by the electorate. That conventional media organization should intensify effort to fortify their gate keeping procedure against avoidable infractions that can tannish their reputation and trust.

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