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**Interrogating Nigerian Voters' Perception
of Digital and Conventional Media Credibility
for Electoral Discourses
during 2023 Presidential Election**

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Abstract: For a longer period, conventional media had enjoyed monopoly as the only media choice for political discourses. But the advancement in information communication technology (ICT), has now broadened media platforms with digital media for same purpose. The 2023 presidential election in Nigeria presented a case study, with both media heavily deployed by politicians. This study therefore, interrogated Nigerian voters' perception of digital and conventional media credibility for electoral discourses during the poll. The study employed mixed methods by combining qualitative and quantitative data through a survey and in-depth interviews. A total of 397 respondents were surveyed across two states – those of Lagos and Oyo, with fourteen informants interviewed. The results showed that media, particularly, radio (40.1%) still rated as the best source of electoral information, followed by television (31.7%). Findings showed that the level of awareness influences voters' participation in elections. The results of the study suggest the following: First, conventional media continues to gain trust from various segments of society, while digital media is gradually expanding its influence. Second, some groups of voters in Nigeria trust conventional platforms more as a reliable

source of information than digital platforms. Third, many voters (54.7%) still rely on digital media as an alternative source of information, which calls for increased media and digital literacy.

Keywords: awareness, conventional, credibility, digital, election, media, Nigeria.

Introduction

That media (both digital and conventional) play critical role in political engagement and framing of political discourse is well established (Seibure, 2019 [1], Serapşah & Sevgihan, 2023 [2]). Without the media, it is almost impossible to achieve robust political engagement (Podkowińska, 2019). [3] Beyond that, media also sharpen voters' decisions to make specific choices, especially, radio and television (Aririguzoh, 2021; [4] Chitralkha & Lennart, 2025; [5] La'aro et al., 2021; [6] Makinde & Abati, 2024; [7] Odionye et al., 2023; [8] & Okinda, et al., 2021). [9] Olowojolu, (2016) [10], note that media influence was instrumental to the direction of the 2015 presidential election result in Nigeria. Media are integral public communication institutions that help in spreading content to the vast majority of people which is meant for their consumption for an informed decision.

Attesting to the role of media in creating political awareness in election, Okpara (2022), [11] reckons that both online and offline media play key role in making sure that voters register for elections. Various scholarly engagements note that media campaigns, especially on social media equally increase the level of political awareness among youths. [11]

The import of the foregoing highlights that traditional and conventional media play a major role in improving voters' awareness during an election. The assumption is that the level of awareness impact on the part of voters sometimes shapes their behaviour. It is also important to add that ethnic or regional biases and political alignment have an impact on the behavior of voters in Nigeria (Aliagan, 2015) [12] raise concerns about the level of trust voters place on information coming from them, as some scholars affirm, (Bradshaw & Howard, 2019; [13] Woolley & Howard, 2018) [14] digital media platforms are culpable for this credibility issue. For instance, note that for their role in engendering information disorder, social media which were once viewed as an agent of freedom and democracy, have attracted grave concerns, lowering levels of trust in media and democratic institutions.

The 2023 presidential election in Nigeria was a historic political battle, given the fact that it was a three-horse race among the leading candidates (including Peter Obi of the Labour Party, who was considered as an underdog). Each of the candidates deployed media to their advantages, the use of digital media was particularly elevated (Ishiekwene, 2023) [15] because of the high number of youths that showed interest in the election. Notwithstanding, it remains unclear

which form of media - digital or conventional - influenced voters' opinion through high level credibility given the fact that various forms of infractions trailed the use of media during the election.

Statement of problem

The huge political, tribal and regional divisions that characterised Nigeria's 2023 presidential election over the choice of candidates, increased youth involvement and noticeable deployment of digital media exposed a deep concern over media credibility. Particularly, penchant to distort political discourses, this, no doubt shaped voters' behaviour and political decision making. It also shaped post-election reactions among the different political stalwarts and ethnic nationalities, breeding deep seated division in the country. During the election, digital media were heavily deployed to the extent that in an attempt to undermine its strength, many traditional political heavy weights were repeatedly quoted, saying that there is no polling booth on Twitter (now X).

Consequently conventional and digital media play the role concerning political awareness as well as during voter decision making process. There has been extensive worldwide research with a focus on media credibility, many surveys have established that conventional media stand an edge over digital media due to stringent editorial standards (Besalú & Carles 2021; [16] Çipuri et al., 2025; [17] Idid et al., 2019; [18] Mustapha, et al., 2022; [19] Salaudeen & Onyechi, 2020; [20] Tai & Alivi, 2025). [21] Similarly, Aliagan and Daranijo (2025); [22] Ofei et al., (2023); [23] Ohaja et al., (2023) [24] argued that digital media tend to suffer from a credibility issue. Onanuga (2023) [25] reasons that concerns about propensity of the various social media platforms to be used to spread misinformation are high. Findings have indicated that X/Twitter, WhatsApp and Facebook, are the main channels of spreading misinformation in Africa.

Despite the importance of media to democratic participation, and the various scholarly positions cited above, limited attention has been paid to comparative assessment of the two media formats in the same study, not only that, there appear to be limited studies on Nigerian voters' perception of media credibility with regard to electoral discourses, particularly on the 2023 presidential election that attracted huge media coverage and youth participation, this gap makes it worthwhile to interrogate Nigerian voters' perceived trust on conventional and digital media platforms.

Research objectives

1. To establish voters' sources of knowledge and awareness of the 2023 presidential election.

2. To determine the credibility attached to conventional and digital media discourses by voters during the election.

Conceptual Review

Media and Voters Awareness

According to Vanuatu Electoral Office (2024), [26] voter awareness relates to voters' motivation and preparedness to take part and to actively involve in an election with the primary objective of increasing trusts in the process, this step encompasses secrecy of ballot, freedom of choice, vote count, and impact of voting on public accountability. Although the concept of voter awareness is said to be related to other concepts – those of voter information and voter education. Voter information includes all details that can enable citizens to vote, including basic facts about the elections and voting, voter education is a broad pedagogical process involving more complex information. [26]

Still on voter awareness, Tiwari (2023) [27] posits that it may not be enough to merely tells electorate the date of an election, taking it further to sensitise them about the significance of participation is not less crucial, they must equally be told about the procedure, as well as active players in an election, including the parties and their candidates, all these efforts are geared towards creating robust awareness for voters. Thus, in achieving the following, Tiwari [27] notes that the use of media such as radio, television, newspaper and social media is crucial. According to Andrew (2024) [28] while television remains a potent medium of disseminating information to a wide audience, rendering it an optimal platform for voter education initiatives, Ebitu, et al. (2023) [29] affirm that extant studies point to the conclusion that political content creation, social media community organising and social media webinars have equally significant positive relations to voters' awareness of the electoral process in Nigeria.

Just like voting behaviour, a significant number of factors and issues shapes voters' awareness of electoral activities, leading to the decision to participate in an election, and most important among these factors are the media. Quite significant scholarly attention has been dedicated to the relationship between voters' awareness or knowledge on the one hand and media campaigns on the other hand (Adams, et al. 2024., [30]; Forrest & Marks, 1999 [31] & Ohme, et al. 2018). [32] For instance, while Ohme et al. [32] note a correlation between media exposure and political activation among the voters, Babcock [30] suggests that news about political systems and political activities, political mobilisation is being brought to the attention of citizen via social media platforms. Studies, such as (Babcock, 2008) [33] have shown that whether voters are unconcerned or avid ones, their knowledge of international or local issues essentially correlate with what they see, hear or read on the radio, on television or on the internet, suggesting that awareness is a by-product of media images, which the electorate adapt as theirs. Therefore, Babcock [33] posits that an informed voter is the best product of the news sources selected.

Media and Challenges of Credibility

The issue of media credibility continues to attract the attention of communication scholars. Despite the various available discourses, this is due to the growing incidence of decreasing news credibility around the globe (Jun, 2023). [34] Calvo-Porrall, et al., (2014) [35] and Asemah et al, (20) [36] captured various scholarly opinions that conceptualise media credibility as the extent to which a media brand is considered or rated to be credible from the standpoint of expertise, trustworthiness and likeability. Media credibility can also be interrogated on the basis of message credibility and source credibility (Srinivasan & Barclay, 2017). [37] There is a positive relationship of message credibility, the credibility of its source and the media channel used. Conversely, no such nexus exists between media credibility and source credibility, implying that the sources of news do not affect the overall perception of a medium trustworthiness. [37] Credibility is usually evaluated as the combination of expertise, trustworthiness, completeness, accuracy, and bias (Anaeto et al., 2012, [38]; [36], Flanagan & Metzger (2023) [34], (Asemah et al.) (2017) [36] add that the extent to which people believe the content or message depends largely on the source it's coming from. If the source is trustworthy the tendency to believe the message is high.

In the view of Bako (2023) [39] all manners of inequalities plaguing media messages have been categorised as information disorder, which “embodies all the various ways in which the integrity of published materials is compromised. Advancements in new media-enabled technologies continue to empower media consumers, changing the dynamics of roles from passive consumers to content creators, which come with credibility concerns. Bako [39] avers further, that the existing structures of the information flow in traditional media are water tight and barricaded with checkpoints of gatekeeping and intense scrutiny, ensuring that stories or news items are refined before going to the public. But this is being hampered by the proliferation of media with advancement in information communication technology (Tutwane, 2023). [40] Furthermore, the thornier issue of credibility of media messages brought forward by various studies appears to be tilting against the social or digital media (Sunday et al., 2023; [41]; Thakur et al., 2020) [42]; some of these studies show that digital media platforms are considered less authentic. Though studies by Osong and Nkang (2019), [43] Sharma and Parma (2016) [44] on the credibility of social media messages contradict the position of the authorities cited above, the user-generated nature of social media platforms has made them easier to accommodate various forms of infractions. To curtail further spread of information disorder, Blake (2023) [45] advised citizens or netizens to avail themselves of the services of fact checking sites and improved media literacy.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on the assumptions of Source Credibility and Media theory. The Source Credibility theory according to [see references 38], is a by-product of Hovland and Weiss's experiment of 1951 where similar messages were presented to some people from different sources categorised as high-credibility and low-credibility, the aim was to determine the effect of the source variable alone. The outcome demonstrated that high-credibility source did not produce more opinion change on three of the four topics presented, implying that having the right source can increase the effectiveness of a message (see references Anaeto et al. [36]) concur that the credibility of all communication, notwithstanding the format, has been found to be heavily influenced by the perceived credibility of the source of that communication. Source credibility is the extent to which individuals have faith and trust in the information provided by others or by organizations (Dominic, et al; 2023). [46] Scholars espouse various factors of source credibility, including expertise and trustworthiness. However, Bogoevska-Gavrilova and Ciunova-Shuleska (2022) [47] note that source credibility is not limited to two constructs, with Ohanian (1990)'s definition from a three-dimensional construct comprising trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness as well as Lou and Yuan (2019)'s four-dimensional construct of trustworthiness, expertise, attractiveness, and similarity. [47] Similarly, the importance of the assumptions underpinning medium theory according to McLuhan (1964) holds that channels of communication differ not in terms of their contents but in regard to how they alter thoughts. He further asserts that medium theory places an emphasis on the features of a medium itself, not necessarily the message it conveys. The relevance of these theories lies in the level of trust and credibility voters place on conventional and digital media as sources of 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. The extent of such belief-system is, no doubt, a key determinant in whether election-related information coming from the two formats of media about the election is taken seriously or ignored by voters.

Method

In this study, the researchers applied a mixed method approach consisting of a survey and in-depth interviews. The survey was considered appropriate for a relatively large population because the focus was on two selected states of the south western part of Nigeria – the Lagos and the Oyo state. Lagos was chosen as one of the two states due to its cosmopolitan nature, making it a miniature of Nigeria, this is apart from being one of the political battle grounds in the 2023

presidential election. The Oyo state was chosen because it is arguably the political headquarters of western Nigeria.

The population of the study is 8, 976, 391, being the total number of potential voters from the two states before the 2023 presidential election, released by the Independent National Electoral Commission – INEC. A sample size of 405, was calculated with the deployment of a Chi-square’s software. The application of this software has been argued as appropriate to determine sample size by scholars (Dierckx, 2013 [48] & McCrum-Gardner, 2010 [49]). A structured questionnaire was the data collection instrument used for the survey. The instrument was proportionately distributed across the two states, with each state 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 six. Moreover, six research assistants were hired to purposively administer the copies of the questionnaire to respondents who have moderate literacy ability to understand the subject matter. Additionally, respondents were asked to indicate if they have a PVC (Permanent Voter Card) before they could participate in the survey. Before going to field, the researchers ensure the instrument has passed validity and reliability tests with a pilot test conducted on a different population in Abuja, the Nigeria capital.

Furthermore, 400 copies of completed questionnaires were retrieved after which 397 were found to have been adequately filled in and the number was adopted as the sample size for the study. The participants in the qualitative research were drawn from the sample of the quantitative, this according to Creswell and Creswell (2018) [50] is acceptable among mixed method research. Their consents were sought before the interview, and they were properly briefed that they were at liberty to participate or not. The point of saturation was used to stop at the 14th interviewee. Descriptive statistics was 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.

Result and Discussion of Findings

This section presents the results on voters’ participation, knowledge and source of awareness on the 2023 presidential election in Nigeria.

Table 1: Voters' participation, knowledge and source of awareness on the 2023 presidential election in Nigeria

SN	Items	Response	F (n = 397)	%
1	Did you participate in the 2023 presidential election in Nigeria	Yes	333	83.9
		No	52	13.1
		I don't want to say	12	3
2	Indicate your nature of participation	Registered as voter	36	9.1
		Registered & collected PVC	21	5.3
		Registered & voted	288	72.5
		Registered but did not vote	52	13.1
3	Indicate your main source of news during the 2023 presidential election in Nigeria	Radio	159	40.1
		Television	126	31.7
		Newspaper	20	5
		X (twitter)	31	7.8
		Facebook	47	11.8
		WhatsApp	14	3.5
4	Conventional media (radio, television & newspapers) provided me with sufficient knowledge about the 2023 presidential election in Nigeria.	Strongly disagree	29	7.3
		Disagree	24	6
		Neutral	53	13.4
		Agree	105	26.4
		Strongly agree	186	46.9
5	Digital media (X, Facebook & WhatsApp) influenced my overall knowledge of the 2023 presidential election in Nigeria	Strongly disagree	54	13.6
		Disagree	78	19.6
		Neutral	48	12.1
		Agree	113	28.5
		Strongly agree	104	26.2
6	I relied more on conventional media than digital media for information on election date, voting procedures, & polling locations.	Strongly disagree	29	7.3
		Disagree	47	11.8
		Neutral	56	14.1
		Agree	151	38
		Strongly agree	114	28.7

Table 1 presents the results on voters' participation, knowledge and source of awareness on the 2023 presidential election in Nigeria. It shows that an overwhelming proportion of the respondents 365 (83.5%) indicated that they participated in the 2023 presidential election in Nigeria. Among the participants, a larger proportion 317 (72.5%) indicated that they registered and voted in the election, 58 (13.3%) registered but did not vote, 39 (8.9%) only registered as voters, while the remaining 23 (5.3%) indicated they had registered and collected their PVCs. From Table 1, it is clear that 165 (37.8%) indicated radio station as their

main source of news during the 2023 presidential election, 140 (32%) indicated television as the main source of news, 25 (5.7%) signified newspaper, while 35 (8%) indicated Twitter as their main news source, 53 (12.1%) indicated Facebook, while the other 19 (4.3%) got election-related news on WhatsApp. From the distribution, it could be deduced that an overwhelming proportion of the respondents indicated radio and television as the main sources of information about the election.

Furthermore, an overwhelming proportion of the respondents 73.5% agreed that conventional media such as radio, television and newspapers provided sufficient knowledge about the 2023 presidential election in Nigeria, while more than half of the respondents 54.5% agreed that digital medial such as twitter, Facebook and WhatsApp influenced their overall knowledge of the 2023 presidential election in Nigeria. Finally, more of the respondents 65.5% agreed that they relied on conventional media than digital media for information on the election date, voting procedure and polling locations during the 2023 presidential election, 13.7% were neutral, while the other 20.8% disagreed that they relied on conventional media rather than digital media for election-related information. In corroboration of the quantitative findings, it was observed from the qualitative data that sources of information about the 2023 presidential election in Nigeria, the majorly spanned across four sources (Figure 1); Through the media, frequent publications by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), community leaders/politicians, and the political activism of those active involved in electioneering.

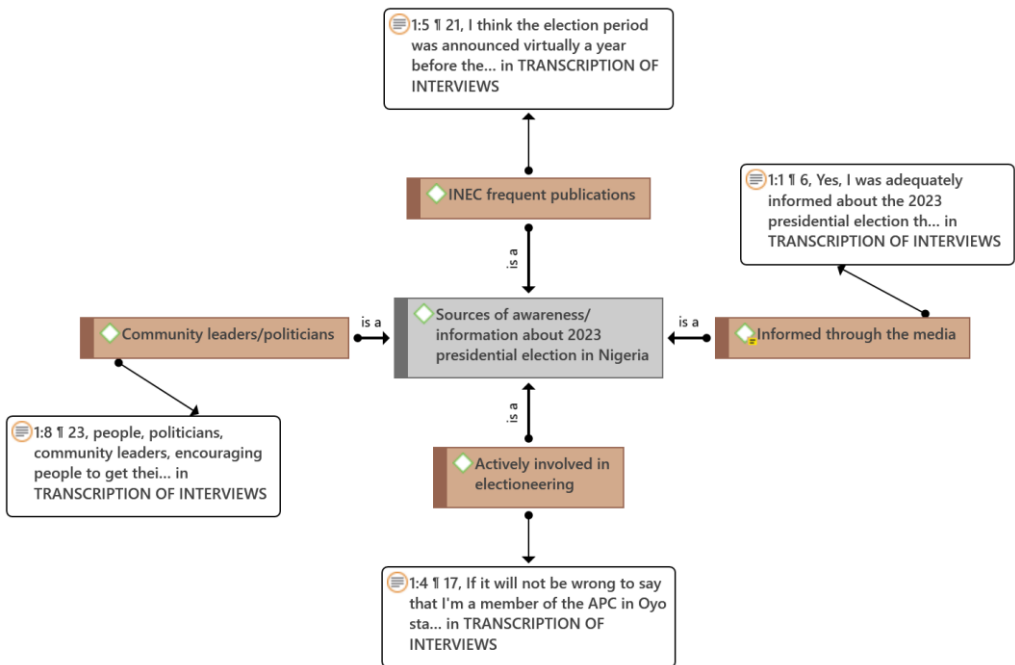


Figure 1. Sources of awareness/information about the 2023 presidential election in Nigeria
Informed through the media

The most common source of awareness and information among those interviewed was through the media. The media were commonly attributed to contribute significantly to what participants knew about the 2023 presidential election in Nigeria. Information received through the media cut across both conventional and digital media. The media platforms mentioned include; TV, radio, newspaper, Facebook amongst others. Sample excerpts are presented below:

“...I must confess to you that I love watching television, which is a conventional medium, why is because it appeals to my sense of hearing and sense of seeing. But despite this, nowadays, radio is now dragging the trend with television, more so that FM stations are streaming online.” (Respondent 10)

“...thanks to television coverage that showed campaign activities across various states.” (Respondent 5)

“...In the radio, television, if you open pages of newspapers, you will see people, politicians, community leaders, encouraging people to get their permanent voters’ card, encouraging people to vote at the election.” (Respondent 13)

From the above, it could be deduced that the role of media (Both conventional and digital media) cannot be over-emphasized. This aligned with the findings from the quantitatively data.

INEC publications

Another uncommon source of information and awareness about the 2023 presidential election in Nigeria was through the frequent publications in the media but by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). Sample excerpts are below:

“...Nigerians about the process of the election. I think the election period was announced virtually a year before the conduct of the election and that was what created awareness about the presidential election. It was announced far away by the Independent National Electoral Commission, which was well published in the print newspapers and it was well broadcast in the radio and television...If you look at the level at which the INEC was releasing guideline” (Respondent 13)

From the above, it could be deduced that INEC also played a role in creating awareness and passing information as it pertains the 2023 presidential election. however, media platforms are used. Which synchronised with the previous findings.

Actively involved in electioneering

Apart from media and INEC, Partisan politics was also attributed as another source of political information and awareness during the presidential poll. Sample excerpts below:

“...I had adequate knowledge about the election, as a voter, I participated and I left around 6:30 to my family house where I cast my ballot. I can recall two famous political parties that participated were APC and PDP. I can't recalled others.” (Respondent 14).

“...If it will not be wrong to say that I'm a member of the APC in Oyo state here. So that makes me one of the active participants during the 2023 election. And I was involved in the mobilization campaign, and especially during the election day, I was one of those who man the polling unit for the various candidates.” (Respondent 11)

From the above, it was observed that partisanship availed many key information about the election.

Community leaders/politicians

Another source of awareness/information about the 2023 presidential election in Nigeria was through community leaders and politicians. Some of the respondents indicated that they relied on information they got from community leaders and politicians they share relationship with. Sample excerpt is provided below:

“...politicians, community leaders, encouraging people to get their permanent voters' card, encouraging people to vote at the election.” (Respondent 13)

Overall, these sources of information were identified to inform the political decisions of some of the participants. A sample excerpt is presented below:

“...This awareness helped me make informed decisions and encouraged me to participate in the election.” (Respondent 5)

Table 2. Perceived media platforms' credibility for election-related matters during the 2023 presidential election

SN	Items	Response	F (n = 397)	%
1	Which one medium did you believe when media report electoral news conflict in the 2023 presidential election?	Television	135	34
		Radio	123	31
		Newspaper	43	10.8
		X (twitter)	25	6.3
		Facebook	46	11.6
		WhatsApp	25	6.3
2	Which media would you rate as credible source of news if limited to one source about 2023 presidential election	Television	148	37.3
		Radio	143	36
		Newspaper	51	12.8
		X (twitter)	22	5.5
		Facebook	29	7.3
		WhatsApp	4	1
3	Which media helped you understand complex or controversial issues about 2023 presidential election	Television	133	33.5
		Radio	131	33
		Newspaper	54	13.6
		X (twitter)	36	9.1
		Facebook	24	6
		WhatsApp	8	2
4	How credible do you find conventional media (television, radio & newspapers) in providing accurate information about the 2023 presidential election?	None	11	2.8
		Not credible	15	3.8
		Slightly credible	47	11.8
		Somewhat credible	62	15.6
		Very credible	206	51.9
		Extremely credible	67	16.9
5	How credible do you find digital media (X, Facebook and WhatsApp) in providing accurate information about the 2023 presidential election?	Not credible	84	21.2
		Slightly credible	138	34.8
		Somewhat credible	61	15.4
		Very credible	98	24.7
		Extremely credible	16	4

Table 2. presents the results on the medium which respondents believe when the media reports electoral news conflict in the 2023 presidential election. It is shown that out of the sample, one-third of the respondents 135 (34%)

believed reports presented on the television, followed by radio with 123 (31%) while 43 (10.8%) of the sample believed reports presented by newspaper. A handful of the respondents 46 (11.6%) believed reports on Facebook, 25 (6.3%) believed reports they get on X (Twitter), while the remaining 25 (6.3%) believed the reports they get from WhatsApp. On which medium is rated as the most credible source of news if limited to one source about 2023 presidential election, 148 (37.3%) indicated their trust in television as the most credible source of news regarding election, followed by radio as 143 (36%) while newspaper garnered 51 (12.8%) as a credible source. Conversely, 29 (7.3%) of the respondents trusted Facebook, 22 (5.5%) indicated X (twitter) as a credible source, while the remaining 4 (1%) indicated that WhatsApp is a credible source of getting news about the 2023 presidential election.

In addition, Television takes the lead in the results pertaining the platform that assisted in better understanding of complex or controversial issues about the 2023 presidential election in Nigeria. It is shown that 133 (33.5%) went for TV, 131 (33%) preferred radio, 54 (13.6%) got better understanding of complex or controversial issues via a newspaper, while 36 (9.1%) went for X/Twitter, 24 (6%) preferred Facebook, 8 (2%) went for WhatsApp, while 11 (2.8%) remain undecided or neutral. From the foregoing, traditional media was preferred by an overwhelming proportion of the respondents (66.5%) for better understanding of complex or controversial issues about 2023 presidential election. Further, results on the extent to which respondents considered conventional media in providing accurate information about the 2023 presidential election, majority of the respondents 206 (51.9%) indicated that conventional media provided credible information regarding the 2023 presidential election, 67 (16.9%) indicated the media to be extremely credible, while a small proportion of the respondents 15 (3.8%) indicated that the conventional media was not credible.

Finally, the trend continues with the results on the extent to which digital media provided accurate information about the 2023 presidential election in Nigeria. It shows that 138 (34.8%) indicated digital media as slightly credible, 98 (24.7%) indicated digital media to be very credible, while 16 (4%) indicated that digital media/platforms are extremely credible in providing accurate information about the 2023 presidential election in Nigeria.

Again, the qualitative data below on the credibility of conventional and digital media corroborated the above findings with the majority of the respondents affirming that conventional media present more credible and verifiable news than digital media

Sample excerpts below:

“...the information shared through radio and television to me are considered more credible than digital media such as WhatsApp, Facebook and X.” (Respondent 1)

“...to me there are major fake reports on digital media platforms, yet, we know how to cope with it. But if credibility is the factor here, I will prefer the conventional media as the most credible.” (Respondent 3)

“...Sincerely, the information on the report of the election on conventional media has been credible compared to the digital media where different reports on information were given with no adequate and tally reports.” (Respondent 4)

Asked to give examples, two of the respondents said the following to back up their position:

“...conventional media is more reliable and credible in vote counting and report giving because their reporters will be there live covering the event compared to the digital media which source information from other and may not be able to get adequate information.” (Respondent 4)

“...I read it on social media that Labour Party candidate Mr Peter Obi was taking the lead from the results of the election followed by Atiku, this was well circulated on X, and WhatsApp, it was added that the current president, who was APC candidate was coming distance third. At the end of the day, it was only conventional media that was reporting accurate results affirmed by INEC.” (Respondent 10)

Conversely, a few respondents support digital media:

“...To me Twitter is highly credible, considering the very fact that the people there, the account holders on Twitter, know that Twitters is not meant for every Tom Dick and Harry, unlike Facebook, so I think majorly, you know, you find celebrities a lot on the platform. And then, because of this, before you see somebody sharing information on Twitter, such person must have gotten the information correctly, So, most time, to a very large extent, I rely upon the validity of Twitter.” (Respondent 12)

From the above, it was explicitly acknowledged by participants that they trusted traditional/conventional media better in all news and information passed about the 2023 presidential election better than digital media.

Discussion of Findings

This study was anchored on two main objectives- to find out the sources of knowledge and awareness of voters about the 2023 presidential election and to determine the credibility attached to conventional and digital media discourses by voters during the election. With regard to the first objective, the findings revealed that radio and television 305 (69.6%) were the main sources of information about the election, though radio came top with 165 (37.8%), followed by television with 140 (32%). This was corroborated by the qualitative data as well. The implication of this was voters' high level of awareness culminating into the

appreciable level of their participation in the poll (83.5%). This resonates with findings from Okinda, et al. (2021), [51] where a positive correlation was established between radio messages and political knowledge as well as election campaign interest. It also sits well with the findings that established a significant positive relationship between radio programmes of political advertisement, discussion and the education or knowledge of electorate. Similarly, the result also confirmed the findings which held that radio is a powerful political force that increases political participation. In the same manner, television is seen as another major source of political news which corresponds to findings from Najeem and Agboluaje (2023) [52] where television was seen as a major source of political news. More importantly, the data showed a commanding and dominant influence of conventional media as sources of information on Nigeria's political landscape with 73.5%.

For the second objective, our findings showed that when the media report electoral news conflict, the majority of respondents believed reports presented on television – 135 (34%) and radio – 123 (31%) compared to Facebook – 46 (11.6%) and Twitter (X) – 25 (6.3%). Again, television - 148 (37.3%) - was rated as the most credible source of information about the election, followed by radio - 143 (36%) - and newspaper – 51 (12.8%) - in that order. The trend continues with television taking the lead as the most preferred medium assisting in better understanding complex or controversial issues about the 2023 presidential election in Nigeria with 133 (33.5%) for TV, 131 (33%) who preferred radio, 54 (13.6%) newspaper, while 36 (9.1%) went for X/Twitter; 24 (6%) preferred Facebook, and 8 (2%) WhatsApp. A similar perspective dominated qualitative data, particularly, reliance on television and radio for authentic presidential results, against fabricated results circulating on digital platforms. This finding confirmed the positions of extant studies by researchers (see references [22]; see references [13]; [14]) that identified X WhatsApp, and Facebook are culpable in credibility issue, because they are channels used to amplify unverifiable information, especially during the collation of results, heightened up the tension and palpable fear that greeted the poll.

On the generic assessment of media credibility between conventional and digital media, our findings finally confirmed the majority of the respondents rated conventional media credible and extremely credible 273 (68.8%) compared to digital media, showing that more people place a higher level of trust on traditional media than on digital media. As reported in many previous studies, (see references [19]; [21]), the finding resonates with the earlier positions that traditional media outlets still command a higher degree of credibility as trusted sources of information compared to online platforms due to their rigorous and painstaking editorial standards. The result also confirmed the study by (see references [16]; [17] and [17] [20]) which established that news carried through conventional/

mainstream media was judged as more credible despite heavier dependency on digital media.

Having measured credibility of conventional and digital media from various perspectives, we contend the results demonstrated that conventional media as highly credible source did not produce a wide opinion change in all the five elements of the instrument used, implying that the right source can increase the effectiveness of a message which resonates with Hovland and Weiss's experiment of 1951 on credibility theory. Similarly, it did not differ from McLuhan's (1964) proposition of media theory, where an emphasis was placed on the features of a medium, in this case, digital platforms considered porous, while conventional are considered fortified with robust gatekeeping mechanisms to curtail information disorder. Collectively, these findings provided a better insight into the value of conventional and digital media on electoral discourses in Nigeria, and how they shaped voters' behaviours. It also presented empirical evidence on the need for ethical media conduct, reflecting the growing global concerns over the abuse of digital media platforms for electoral purposes.

Conclusion

This study has again reinforced the global understanding that the media play a central role as political oxygen, be it conventional or digital. It also showed that there is a correlation between the level of awareness and political participation, implying that, the amount of awareness created on a political activity dictates the interest and participation of the electorate. Our findings also revealed that the radio takes up the leading place as a source of political news in Nigeria during the 2023 presidential election, followed by television. This might not be unconnected with the feature of radio including portability and accessibility, making it a companion for many households. Our findings also confirmed the global research position that conventional media platforms enjoy a higher degree of credibility than digital media platforms – X, WhatsApp and Facebook, given the vulnerability of digital media to promote information disorder during sensitive and tense situations by spreading fictitious election results, which comes with grave consequences. Responses from research subjects revealed that when confronted with conflicting information or when left with a single medium as a source of news, conventional media platforms are perceived to be a better option. It is also necessary to stress that the position here notwithstanding, many voters in Nigeria still rely on digital media platforms as alternative sources of political information, the study therefore calls for media and digital literacy among the populace for the latter to be able to cope with the misuse of both digital and conventional media for political reasoning.

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Credit authorship contribution statement

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