

## TWITTER, THE YOUTH AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN SOUTHEAST NIGERIA

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### Abstract

Advancements in information and communication technologies have really revolutionized the way and manner of gathering and disseminating information across the globe. The situation is such that at the mere click of a button one can access information, ideas, products and services of value, even in the comfort of their bedrooms. Twitter, a product of advancements in information and communication technologies, has been identified as a veritable instrument which politicians use to reach out to the electorate. 2023 general elections in Nigeria trumped-up twitter as a principal platform for political participation among Nigerian youths. Scholars have adumbrated on politics and political discourses on social media platforms. They have even extended their searchlight to the effectiveness of twitter for political mobilization but not much has been done in the use of twitter for political participation among youths of Southeast Nigeria. It is such an observed gap in knowledge that propelled this study. Relying on the survey method of research, this study investigated the extent of exposure of Southeast youths to twitter, the frequency of such exposure to political information, and the persuasive ability of the political tweets on Southeast Nigerian youths. The study found among other things that a very significant proportion of the respondents (three-quarters) of Southeast Nigerian youths are highly exposed to twitter, and that the political tweets were indeed persuasive.

**Keywords:** Election, ICT's, Political Communication, Southeast, Youths

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## Introduction

The growth of modern technology and the ever-changing complex nature of societies of the world have revolutionized the way and manner information gathering and dissemination are carried out. Citizens, with internet platforms, have utilized the opportunity created by modern technologies in satisfying their quest to keep abreast of happenings around them. Leslie (2015) notes that “as the Internet evolved and spread, a set of specialized and well-known services grew up on and around it, like the social media sites The internet enabled social media platforms according to (Omenugha, Uzuegbulam & Eze 2018) are now the biggest market place where one can find products, services, information, ideas and knowledge at the mere click of a button. So much has been said and written about the internet that it will be quite unnecessary to continue dwelling on it here. But suffice it to say that the power of the internet is indeed enormous and revolutionary. Its influence in the contemporary world has been so monumental that hardly is there anyone who has not experienced its impact in one way or the other, directly or indirectly, actively or passively (Duru, 2018). In the field of politics, the impact of the internet has been decidedly felt especially on the part of the youth. According to a report by the Nigerian Communication Commission, over 120 million Nigerians are online, seventy percent or over 80 million of them are youths between the ages of 18 - 35 years. For most of them, the internet, especially social media sites like twitter are where they live and work

Youths form a very critical age group today, especially in developing societies where most of the voters are young (Ritchie & Roser 2019). Communication tools have a crucial role in terms of informing and getting them to actively participate in politics. Hence, the youth who have an important place in the political process obtain information using communication tools such as twitter and have the chance to participate in different spheres of politics. So, Twitter, the popular microblogging, social media platform, has been prominently covered in the press for its perceived role in activism, disaster recovery, and elections amongst other things. (Dhiraj Murthy 2015). In the case of elections, Twitter as a communication tool played a crucial role in various counties’ elections in terms of informing the electorate and getting them to actively participate especially in directly reaching out to voters. (Bryce 2024), (Hazem, Farhan, Hend, Maryam, Tran, Talal, Yasir 2024), and the 2024 Indonesia elections (Septi, Retno, Lita, Yulianta & Sukma 2024).

Twitter is regarded by many users as the best social media platform for conveying political messages in bite-size pieces to the electorate with an ever-decreasing attention span (Moore, 2015). In a study to examine the potential of Twitter sphere, (Kwak, Lee, Park, & Moon, 2010) found out that of all the sampled categories, political hashtags and discussions were the most persistent on Twitter

## Statement of the Problem

Twitter has been identified by scholars as one of the prominent social networks which politicians and political activists can use to effectively convince the youth. However, the effectiveness of Twitter on youths' decisions to participate or engage in political activities is complex and multifaceted. That is because other factors, such as political ideology, social background, and personal experiences, also influence how young people perceive and engage with political content on Twitter. Also, while Twitter can certainly influence youths' decisions to become partisan or to support a political candidate, it is unlikely to be the only factor in their decision-making process. It is against this backdrop that this study sought to determine the extent to which Southeast Nigerian youths used twitter for political engagement in the 2023 general elections. Previous studies on political discourses focused on the marketability of the candidates and the effectiveness of twitter in political mobilization but not much has been done in x-raying the usage of Twitter for political participation in the South-Eastern region of Nigeria. In other words, there is limited empirical evidence on access to the platform, the volume of information available on it, and the persuasive ability of the available information therein. This study addressed the identified gaps for a better understanding of the role of twitter in modern political engagement.

## Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study were to:

- i. determine the level of exposure of Southeast Nigerian youths to twitter in the 2023 general elections.
- ii. ascertain the frequency at which Southeast Nigerian youths sought and obtained political information from twitter
- iii. find out how persuasive the political tweets were on Southeast Nigerian youths in the 2023 general elections.

## Research Questions

In line with the set objectives of the study, the following research questions emanated:

- i. what is the level of Southeast Nigerian youths' exposure to twitter in the 2023 general elections?
- ii. How often did Southeast Nigerian youths seek and obtain political information from twitter in the 2023 general elections?
- iii. How persuasive were those political tweets on the youths of Southeast Nigeria?

## Literature Review

### X (Twitter): A Conceptual Overview

Dunu & Uzuchukwu (2018) define twitter as an information network made up of 280-character messages (called tweets) which is used by millions of people and organizations to discover and share new information. Twitter, sometimes described as the SMS of the Internet, is basically a website operated by an organization -Twitter Inc. A technology entrepreneur Jack Dorsey started the company in March 2006 and launched the platform in July of the same year (D'Monteis, 2019). According to a report written by editors of Encyclopedia Britannica in 2024, Twitter announced in 2022 that Elon Musk would acquire it and that Musk was to become the company's sole owner. But, in an apparent case of buyer's remorse, three months later Musk announced that he would be withdrawing his bid for Twitter, citing concerns over bot accounts and claiming that the company was in "material breach of multiple provisions" of the purchase agreement. Bret Taylor, the chairman of Twitter's board of directors, responded by saying that the company was "committed to closing the transaction on the price and terms agreed upon with Mr. Musk." By then, Twitter shares had declined roughly one-third from Musk's proposed purchase price. In July 2022, Twitter sued Musk to force him to buy the company, and in September 2022 Twitter's shareholders voted to accept Musk's offer. Musk bought Twitter in October 2022 for \$44 billion at his original proposed price of \$54.20 per share.

However, Musk used a different company, X Corp., which he registered in Nevada in March 2023, to merge with Twitter. The merger between Twitter and X Corp took place in April 2023. In a court filing in California in early April 2023, it became clear that Twitter, as a company, no longer exists. Today, X which was formerly known as Twitter is primarily run as a social media platform, although Musk has expressed an interest in making it an "everything app," including for financial transactions, like China's WeChat (Britannica Money, 2024).

As explained by the company's owner, Elon Musk, the strategic decision behind turning Twitter into X isn't just a simple name change; it's a significant step towards realizing his ambitious goal of creating an "everything app". He explained that X Corp acquired Twitter with two main goals in mind: protecting free speech and advancing X as a comprehensive digital platform. The drive behind this transformation stems from the shifting dynamics of Twitter's functionality.

At first, Twitter was all about quick, 140-character messages. But over time, it has become a versatile platform that accommodates a wide range of contents, including longer videos and in-depth conversations. Musk pointed out that the traditional Twitter name no longer

fits this expanded scope, leading to the decision to move on from its iconic bird symbol. Sourced from X handle @elonmusk (July 24, 2023).

Twitter is more than a platform to disseminate information as Dunu & Uzochukwu went further to explain that it also provides opportunities to listen to conversations and gather information in real-time. Tweets are publicly visible by default, though senders can restrict message delivery to just their followers. Twitter users subscribe to and receive tweets by following an account. Followers receive messages in their timeline that include a feed of all the account they subscribe to (Stone, 2009). Among a multitude of social media platforms, Twitter, which is the world's largest microblogging service and third largest social network site behind Facebook and YouTube has particular potential to be a strong force in adding to political discourse due to its open, horizontal, and broadly-networked architecture (Barnett, 2011, Parmalee & Bichard, 2012). Unlike Facebook, which defaults to restricted, in-network exposure to other users' posts, Twitter posts are disseminated publicly and can be easily viewed by all users. The open system of Twitter creates a venue for users to respond to other users, thereby making it a vibrant forum for public discourse (Kim, 2011). X (Twitter's) search engine (<http://search.twitter.com>) is a great tool for monitoring conversation on any given topic on twitter - These short, easy to read public messages make twitter a powerful, real-time way of communicating. (Smith, 2011)

### Political Engagement

According to a (2016) world bank report, political engagement is the participation of citizens in selecting and sanctioning the leaders who wield power in government including by entering themselves as contenders for leadership positions. It also expands that citizen engagement in politics or government could involve non-political actions such as participating in service delivery, providing input and feedback at the request of public officials, and monitoring the performance of government agencies. Political engagement includes citizen actions as voters, as actual and potential challengers for leadership positions in government, and in organized groups that pressure elected politicians and appointed public officials through civil society action and public protests. It can take many forms, including voting, staying informed on political issues, joining a political party, advocating or canvassing for an issue or candidate and more. Political engagement is defined as the beliefs, commitments, and actions related to exerting power or influencing people and institutions with power on decisions about social issues; it can be formal or informal, legal or illegal, online or offline, and it can involve influencing from inside or outside the system (Ekman & Amnå, 2012).

### X and Youth's Political Engagement

Political engagement is defined here as a cognitive process, as Elena, Mirjam & Darren (2016) explained. They further argued that when the brain becomes stimulated by external stimuli, in this case relating to politics, elaboration occurs. Elaboration here means the connecting of thoughts, recognizing the new information on X as important and relevant, a process that leads to having an attitudinal reaction. Putting these concepts into a more practical perspective, Ritchie & Roser (2019) explained that youths are a very critical age group today, especially in developing societies where the majority of the voters are young and are often on social network sites such as the twitter. They noted that youths often have their role model in opinion leaders like; celebrities, public office holders who have done noble or reputable citizens who have made a mark so, communication tools have a crucial role in terms of informing the youth and getting them to actively participate in politics. Hence, the youth who have an important place in the political process obtain information using communication tools such as X and tweets from opinion leaders help the youth in political decision making and chance to engage in different spheres of politics. As Sawant (2000) notes "an effective political communication medium should be capable of providing information that can guarantee a well-informed citizenry, competent to participate in governance"

Looking at how political candidates used social media during the 2023 general election in Nigeria, (Chukwu 2023) notes that an analysis of 1,089 posts by the presidential candidates showed that they mostly used Facebook and Twitter. This shows that twitter is increasingly shaping the political agenda, a role that was formerly dominated by television. Twitter is now followed by television, or at the very least, broadcast news (Ott, 2017). Twitter allows political candidates, parties, and activists to disseminate information about their platforms, policies, campaign events, and achievements. It provides a platform for spreading awareness about political issues, mobilizing support, and engaging with a wide audience. It is a social network distinguished for its ease of content generation.

Twitter's networking features aid in forming groups of people with similar interests who may get together offline. In Nigeria, political candidates can directly engage with their supporters and potential voters on Twitter. They can respond to queries, address concerns, and provide real-time updates (Chinedu-Okeke & Obi, 2016). Engaging with supporters helps in building trust, fostering loyalty, and creating a sense of inclusiveness. Voters' rights, voter registration, and the election process may all be explained to them over X. Election dates, polling places, and pertinent documentation requirements can all be shared on X by campaigners.

Twitter can help boost political engagement and voting turnout by improving voter education and awareness (Carlos, Vargas, Estigoy & Hail, 2022). This is why a 2023 report by Tech cabal notes that even though only 0.04% of the country's total internet users are on Twitter, political



parties employ influencers on Twitter the most. “This is because Twitter has more real-time audience and the algorithm of the platform makes it easier for news to spread quickly also because other platforms are mostly for entertainment and do not have political influencers like Twitter does.

### X (Twitter) Hashtag (#) and Youth Political Engagement in Nigeria

Political engagement thrives when people have safe spaces where they can talk and air their opinions without fear of a clampdown. As noted by Ihebuzo & Egbunike (2018) who explained that the 280-character limit of twitter conversation affects its style and manner of engagement, and this differs from other social media platforms. X hashtags are used to group conversations around themes. Campaign-specific hashtags can be developed and used by political campaigners to rally supporters, boost engagement, and magnify their messaging (Dungse, Opeyemi & Chidozie, 2018). Campaigns using hashtags may spark discussions online, boost exposure, and mobilize support for certain politicians (Hadma, & Anggoro, 2022). Political activists and supporters may connect, plan, and coordinate grassroots events via X. It may be employed to organize volunteers, organize door-to-door campaigns, voter registration drives, or neighborhood gatherings as listed by (Pérez-Martínez, Rodríguez & Tobias, 2017).

To corroborate the above point by Pérez-Martínez et al, Obia explains that “The way in which Hashtags (#) was used on twitter by the “Obidient Movement” during the 2023 election provides insight into how Twitter serves as a coordinating platform for political engagement and activist campaigns in Nigeria. He went further to explain that during the campaign, Twitter was used in at least three ways: [to co-ordinate campaign, to amplify the voice of the campaign globally](#), and to berate brands and public figures deemed to be opposed to the Movement.

- . In terms of coordinating the campaigns, Twitter was actively used to share information regarding venues and to update the electorate on breaking news events. Indeed, without a platform like Twitter it would have been difficult, if not impossible, for the “Obidient Movement” to spread across the country and to co-ordinate themselves in highly organized and effective ways thereby, feeding off one another’s energy (Obia, 2023).
- . Youths who are partisan and are twitter users also sought to amplify conversations and engage other youths using such hashtags as #Obidient, #Obidatti, #GetYourPVC, #rebuild, #icomeinpeace #gunzdownlovevup etc. It was clear that users wanted coverage of the campaign by international news organizations and to persuade other youths to join the conversation. It seems the agenda was to “get the word out there”, for people to retweet widely, for celebrities and influencers to use the hashtag, and for news on the “Obidient Movement” to be widely circulated. This strategy of amplification appears to

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- . have been successful when Nigerians, on the night of the presidential and National Assembly election took to social media to pressure the Independent National Electoral Commission to fulfill its promise in uploading the results of the elections from different polling units across the country unto its server which they (INEC) adhered to. The hashtag #Uploadtheresults garnered over 26,000 tweets as at press time and it was one of the highest trends on the microblogging site. Punch Newspaper (February 26, 2023).
- . In contrast, Obidients called out personalities and brands that were silent on the hashtag, actors like Zack Orji, Joke Silver and Eniola Badmus were criticised for supporting and campaigning for President Bola Ahmed Tinubu. In similar fashion, Twitter users attacked Pastor Adeboye of the Redeemed Christian Church of Good (RCCG) for stating that Tinubu will by God's grace fix Nigeria (Sahara reporters May 10, 2023).

## Theoretical Framework

The theories that underpin this study are the uses and gratification, technological determinism theories

### Uses and Gratification theory

Uses and Gratification theory was propounded by Elihu Katz, Jay Blumler and Michael Gurevich in 1974 (Ukaegbu, 2018). This theory deals with the nexus between the expected gratification and the obtained gratification from the media. It is concerned with what people do with the media instead of what media do to people. The assumption is that people influence the effects media have on them. The Uses and Gratifications theory assumes that members of the audience are not passive but play active role in interpreting and integrating media into their own lives. McQuail (1987) opines that four types of use, and gratification exist for media users.

- a. Diversion: - This is the escape from routine issues or societal problems.
- b. Personal Relationship: - To enable the surrogate member of a community to function better in society.
- c. Personal Identity: - This helps to explore and confirm our personal identity.
- d. Surveillance: - This is the feeling of knowing what is happening in society.

Okunna (1999) notes that within the mass media, people's needs are generated by their individual differences. These needs as explained by Okunna arise from differences in sex, ethnicity, education, profession etc. Because the needs within the people are determined by who or what they are, and people use mass media for the purpose of gratifying these needs. This goes



to support Blumler and Katz, (1974) assumption that media audiences usually derive gratifications from three different sources, namely, media content, media exposure and the social context of exposure. The underlying presupposition is that media users selectively engage media that possess the features or characteristics that can meet or satisfy their needs at that point in time. Thus, in applying this theory to this study, it is reasoned that youths who are internet users deliberately choose X to serve their need for involvement and awareness about political issues in the country. Even within the twitter space, the youths choose to follow certain people who they believe will always have important political information to share. Like political candidates, activists, analysts etc. The utility they need here is a level of engagement in politics, and twitter is employed by them specially to gratify that need.

### Technological Determinism Theory

Marshal McLuhan's theory of Technological Determinism was propounded in 1962. McLuhan (1964) submitted that "the medium is the message" He supported that assertion with the fact that it is the medium that shapes and controls the scale and form of human association".

Technological determinism is a reductionist theory which presumes that a society's technology drives the development of its social structure and cultural values. The term is believed to have been coined by Thorsten Veblen, an American Sociologist (Hauer, 2017).

Technological determinism theory holds that technological developments are the central component in innovation, requiring no interface with the background. Hauer (2017) sums up the proposition of this concept thus:

- ✓ that the advancement of technology itself trails a foreseeable, perceptible route basically outside traditional or political guidance, and
- ✓ that the "effects" of technology on societies are integral rather than socially habituated or fashioned because society systematizes itself to support and further develop a technology once it emerges.

The theory, according to Griffins (2000) and Folarin (2003), asserts that the leading medium anytime is usually the dominant medium that forms the arrowhead of information sharing, Twitter has been described as leading in information-sharing. Hence, scholars have noted that even the traditional media often report information from twitter.

Regarding this work, twitter has been described as one of the primary movers in social change since the youths who are intended to change the Nigerian political scene are mostly on X and at the same time most political candidates are on twitter sharing one political information or the other. Technological determinism theory believes that advancement in technology, especially in

the area of information and communication (ICT), has shrunk the world into a global village by reducing distance, time and space, In other words, that is what the twitter which is technologically enabled has done, it has been described by Dunu & Uzochukwu (2018) as more than a platform to disseminate information, it also provides opportunities to listen to conversation and gather information in real-time.

### Methodology

The researchers adopted the survey research design to study a sample from five south eastern states. The population under study was all the registered youths' voters in Southeast Nigeria during the 2023 general election. According to the *Premium Times* newspaper of January 11, 2023, the population stood at 10,907,606. Given an estimated number of registered youth voters in Southeast Nigeria at 8,180,701, the study arrived at a sample size of 380 respondents using the Taro Yamani's formular at 95% confidence level and at a 0.05 confidence interval.

The multi-stage sampling technique was adopted for the study.

At the first stage, the stratified/proportionate sampling technique was used in sample allocation to the five states of Southeast Nigeria.

In stage 2: The simple random sampling technique was employed to distribute the allocated sample among youths in each state.

Stage 3 involved purposive sampling wherein the researchers used their expertise to select a sample that is most useful to the purpose of the research (Ihechu, 2021). The criteria considered in the purposive sampling technique included being an eligible voter, having access to internet, being on twitter, in addition to the respondents' understanding of the topic under discourse.

The questionnaire was used to elicit information from the selected sample and the data presented in tables. The weighted mean approach of data analysis or Likert scale was used to analyze the data. Values assigned to codes were in a descending order, ranging from the highest positive of 5 to the least negative at 1.

### Presentation and Analysis of Data

The following presentations dwelt on data generated from the questionnaire which were hinged on the research questions. The measurement indices were subjected to the modified 5-point Likert Scale where: SA (5): represented Strongly agreed; A (4): Agreed; FA (3): Fairly agreed; D (2): Disagreed; and SD (1): Strongly disagreed. To take decisions, mean scores of 3.0 and above ( $\bar{x} \geq 3.0$ ) were considered significant.

Response to Research Question One: What is the level of exposure of Southeast Nigerian youths to (X) twitter?

RQ1 above was used to ascertain the level of exposure of Southeast youths to twitter. Item 6 in the questionnaire was used in answering the question. The data generated are as presented in table 1 below:

Table 1: Responses on respondents' level of exposure to twitter

| Response        | Frequency | Percentage |
|-----------------|-----------|------------|
| Very often      | 289       | 76         |
| Often           | 68        | 18         |
| Once in a while | 23        | 6          |
| Total           | 380       | 100        |

The data in table 1 above shows that three-quarters of the respondents were highly exposed to twitter. It means that a very significant proportion of the respondents were competent to provide data for the study since they constituted the majority when compared to the opinion held by the others. The finding, therefore, established the competence of majority of the respondents to participate in the study.

Research Question Two: How often do Southeast youths seek and obtain political information from X twitter?

Research question 2 was used to determine how often Southeast youths seek and obtain political information from twitter. The data obtained are as presented in table 2 below.

Table 2: Responses on how often the respondents use Twitter for political information

| Response        | Frequency | Percentage |
|-----------------|-----------|------------|
| Very often      | 236       | 62         |
| Sometimes       | 95        | 25         |
| Not necessarily | 49        | 13         |
| Total           | 380       | 100        |

Result in table 2 above shows that three-fifths of the respondents got their political information from the tweets and replies on X while less than one-fifth held no definite opinion on the matter. It means that majority of the respondents go to twitter very often for their political information needs.

Research Question Three: How persuasive are the political tweets on Southeast Nigerian youths?

Research question 3 was used to ascertain how persuasive the political tweets are on Southeast Nigerian youths. The data obtained are as presented in table 3 below.

Table 3: Responses on how persuasive the political tweets are on Southeast Nigerian youths

| Item 3                                                                         | Response   |      |     |      |     |      | Total | Mean value     |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|------|-----|------|-----|------|-------|----------------|
|                                                                                |            |      |     |      |     |      |       | $\bar{x}$      |
| You are moved to engage in political activity(ies) by the tweets you have read | Code       | SA=5 | A=4 | UD=3 | D=2 | SD=1 | 15    | 1335           |
|                                                                                | Frequency  | 55   | 168 | 84   | 63  | 10   | 380   | 380            |
|                                                                                | Code value | 275  | 672 | 252  | 126 | 10   | 1335  | = 3.5          |
|                                                                                | result     |      |     |      |     |      |       |                |
|                                                                                | Percentage | 14   | 44  | 22   | 17  | 3    | 100   | $\bar{x}= 3.5$ |

Table 3 above shows that more than half of the respondents at 58% said they were persuaded by the political tweets to engage in one political activity or the other while one-fifth was not. It means that those who were persuaded by the political tweets were nearly three times the number of those who were not. Also, those who were persuaded are greater in number than those who were not persuaded and those who held no specific opinion at 44%. It implies that majority of the respondents were persuaded to engage in politics due to the tweets they read from the X. Also, the calculated mean value,  $\bar{x}_{cal}$ , of 3.5 shows a substantial positive effect on the respondents compared to the mean value  $\bar{x}_{tab}$  of 3.0. The tweets were, therefore, able to persuade the respondents.

Again, research question 3 was used to find out why the political tweets persuaded majority of the respondents to engage in politics. The obtained data were analyzed as follows:

Table 4: Responses on why the respondents were persuaded by the political tweets

| 4                                                                                                                                                                            | Response   | Total                     | Mean value     |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|---------------------------|----------------|
|                                                                                                                                                                              |            |                           | $\bar{x}$      |
| The tweets gave me reason to engage in politics through enlightening me about my rights and the necessary knowledge to participate in a meaningful way for a better Nigeria. | Code       | SA=5 A=4 UD=3 D=2 SD=1 15 | 1360           |
|                                                                                                                                                                              | Frequency  | 67 169 78 54 12 380       | 380            |
|                                                                                                                                                                              | Code value | 335 676 234 108 12 1360   | = 3.6          |
|                                                                                                                                                                              | Percentage | 18 44 21 14 3 100         | $\bar{x}= 3.6$ |

The results in table 4 above show that whereas 62% of the respondents were persuaded due to the enlightenment and necessary political knowledge gotten from tweets, less than one-fifth or 17% of the respondents were not moved by the reason advanced for engaging in politics. It means that the presented argument in the political tweets got more respondents convinced to become partisan. The calculated mean value of 3.6, which is substantially greater than the decision point value of 3.0 by a difference of 0.6  $\geq$  1 confirms that the persuasive effect of the political tweets on the respondents was very reasonable to stimulate the desired support.

## Discussion Of Findings

The data in table one provides the answer to research question number one which sought to find out the level of exposure of Southeast youths to twitter in the 2023 general elections. It shows that the respondents have a very high level of exposure to twitter at 76%, and that more than three-quarters are exposed to X twitter as a communication platform. This finding is in line with the views of Yetty (2019) which posits that the youths are very impressionable and like to follow trends. Hence, the increasing number of youths on twitter. It also corroborates *Media Master's* (2023) assertion that such high level of engagement could be traceable to how tweets attract public attention and excite interest in comments made on issues of public concern. It means therefore that enthusiasm and inquisitiveness could have been responsible for attracting many youths to twitter.

The data on table two provides an answer to research question number two which sought to determine how often Southeast Nigerian youths used the twitter for political participation in the 2023 general elections. The finding here is that two-thirds of the respondents in the study used

twitter very often for political engagement in the 2023 general elections. This finding is supportive of (Ritche & Roser's, (2019) declaration that twitter as an internet platform is believed to spread a single tweet on a political issue to numerous people scattered across geopolitical divides. In that way, youths who have access to twitter get to know about political issues. The medium, therefore, is the message which is in line with the technological determinism theory as enunciated by Marshal McLuhan in 1964. It is the technological prowess of twitter that enabled it to reach such many youths with the same political information. This finding contrasts sharply with that of (Izuogu, 2008) in which he found excessive abuse arising from the frequent use of social media platforms among the youth.

The data on table three provides an answer to research question number three which sought to find out how persuasive the political tweets were on Southeast Nigerian youths. As evident in the table, more than half of the respondents (58%) confirmed being persuaded by the political tweets. Again, a higher percentage of the respondents (62%) attested to being persuaded to take part in politics because of the enlightenment and political knowledge obtained from the political tweets (see table four). The calculated mean value of 3.6 testify to the substantial pressure experienced by people exposed to the political tweets on X. Sawant (2000) notes that an effective political communication medium should be capable of providing information that can guarantee a well-informed citizenry competent to participate in governance.

Sawant's view was also supported by Eze & Mbeso (2018) who submitted that twitter needed to be used to provide public service information through set political agenda which is capable of moving respondents to the expected or desired political action. This study found that the provided information could generate public agenda, particularly as it relates to political engagement. It was the information provided on X that facilitated political engagement by most of the youths who are exposed to political tweets. The acquired knowledge, therefore enabled the message receivers to enrich their knowledge base to be able to take political decision on the issues raised.

## Conclusion and Recommendations

This study concludes that majority of the youths in Southeast Nigeria were not only deeply exposed to twitter, but they also sought and received political information very often from that platform, and that by the reasons of their exposure and frequent use of twitter the people became involved in national politics. Hence, twitter X has been confirmed as a very important social media platform in Nigeria's political engineering processes, especially among the youth.

## Recommendations

In view of the findings of this study, it is hereby recommended as follows:



- i. Since majority of youth have access to political information through twitter and subsequently follow their favorite politicians on twitter, politicians should do well by engaging the youths more through this medium.
- ii. Youth should also be made to understand the notion that all that glitters may not be gold. As a social media platform, twitter has its shortcomings which they ought to avoid both online and offline.
- iii. To make a difference in the longer term, it is essential that youths are engaged in formal political processes that will enable them to have a stake in the politics of their fatherland.

Essentially, the youths are encouraged to move from the level of being commentators to that of being contestants in elections.

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