

Digital Media and Campaign Practices in Nigeria:

Ekiti State Governorship Election

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## Abstract

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This is a study of the digital campaign practices of a winning opposition candidate in a governorship election in Ekiti state, Nigeria. The study was conducted through i) qualitative content analysis of news reports and digital artifacts, and ii) interviews with campaign staffers of a winning candidate. The study found that the winning candidate framed digital media use as elitist and anti-people but nonetheless discreetly used same for campaigning. In addition, the campaign engaged in two main practices: informing and involving. Informing practices include using SMS to coordinate meetings and spread rumors about the opposition, as well as for debunking opposition's allegations. The campaign delegated rumor-spreading tasks to proxies, thereby saving itself the pain of proving accusations against the opponent. Involving techniques

include sharing information about financial and food inducements to vote, which people shared widely. The combination of these two practices allowed the challenger to frame the incumbent as elitist while portraying himself as a “man of the people.” The findings suggest that digital media’s most important role in the election was amplifying existing sociopolitical relationships between elites and voters

# Table of Contents

<b>TABLE OF CONTENTS</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>LIST OF TABLES</b> .....	<b>7</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGMENTS</b> .....	<b>8</b>
<b>CHAPTER 1</b> .....	<b>9</b>
<b>INTRODUCTION</b> .....	<b>9</b>
POLITICAL CULTURE BEYOND TECHNOLOGY.....	10
<b>CHAPTER 2</b> .....	<b>13</b>
<b>DIGITAL MEDIA IN POLITICAL CAMPAIGNING</b> .....	<b>13</b>
<b>CHAPTER 3</b> .....	<b>20</b>
<b>BACKGROUND OF THE ELECTION</b> .....	<b>20</b>
<b>CHAPTER 4</b> .....	<b>23</b>
<b>METHODOLOGY</b> .....	<b>23</b>
ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS .....	27
<b>CHAPTER 5</b> .....	<b>30</b>
<b>FINDINGS</b> .....	<b>30</b>
CANDIDATE AND MEDIA FRAMING OF THE ELECTION .....	30
A SOCIAL MEDIA ELECTION IN A RURAL STATE.....	33
DIGITAL MEDIA PRACTICES.....	34

<i>Coordinating Campaign Activities</i> .....	34
<i>Spreading Rumors via SMS</i> .....	37
<i>Sharing (Building?) Stomach Infrastructure</i> .....	39
<b>CHAPTER 6</b> .....	<b>40</b>
<b>DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS</b> .....	<b>40</b>
<b>CHAPTER 7</b> .....	<b>44</b>
<b>CONCLUSION</b> .....	<b>44</b>
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b> .....	<b>49</b>
<b>APPENDICES</b> .....	<b>57</b>

# List of Tables

<b>Table number</b>		<b>Page</b>
1.0	Categories of Interviewee Profiles	26
2.0	Reviewed Articles by Print Publications (June 19-25, 2014)	28

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# CHAPTER 1

## Introduction

The use of digital media by political candidates in elections has been a subject of extensive research by political communication scholars in the United States and Europe, and to a much lesser extent other parts of the world (Bimber, 2014; Foot & Schneider, 2006; Hermans & Vergeer, 2013). As more citizens have better access to digital tools, scholars have sought to understand what transformational effects they may be having on how politicians disseminate information, engage citizens, and mobilize voter support. Digital media, used here to describe internet and mobile phone technologies, are not the first technologies to receive attention for perceived potential for transforming politics. Newspaper, radio, film, and television have at some point been studied extensively for their novelty and potential political implications (Manovich, 2001). At the turn of the 21st century, scholarly attention turned to how the “new” digital media would transformational political life.

In Nigeria, as in most African countries, the increasing penetration of internet and mobile phones has raised hopes that these new technologies could help consolidate fledgling democracies. Despite the general paucity of socioeconomic infrastructure in Sub-Saharan Africa, the region has experienced some of the fastest growth rates in mobile phone and internet penetration in the world over the past decade. In Nigeria, for example, mobile phone subscribers have risen from just over 866,000 in 2001 to over 150 million active lines as of July 2015. During the same period, internet users rose from 200,000 to 93 million (NCC, 2015). These technologies are now major social connectors, and have improved the quality of elections by making them more efficient and transparent, thereby ensuring increasingly peaceful elections in

Nigeria and across the continent (Adewumi & Daramola, 2010; Etzo & Collender, 2010; Ifukor, 2010; Olorunnisola & Douai, 2013; Schuler, 2008; Smyth & Best, 2013).

## **Political Culture Beyond Technology**

Beyond digital media playing logistical role in elections, scholars of African politics have theorized how tensions between groups continue to pose serious challenges to democratic consolidation, which permit opportunistic politicians to instigate people against one another as a means of maintaining their hold on power (Berman, Eyoh, and Kymlicka, 2004; Nyamnjoh, 2005). Consequently, despite better elections being held, election results continue to reflect a pattern that has been observed in the continent for the past 25 years since many countries began multiparty elections: people vote for co-ethnics or along other forms of personal ties like constituencies of origin, family ties, among others. Citizens' involvement in democratic elections seems to be influenced by a motivation to have one's kinsman in political office so as to gain from the spoils of the state, which Nigerians call the "national cake." In this scenario, received wisdom would indicate that politicians will draw on these forms of ties in their campaign messages to mobilize support for election. Such campaigns should contain the logic of "it is our time to chop" (Lindberg, 2003), which in standard English means "it is our time to eat (from the national cake)."

So when I went to the field for the governorship election in Ekiti state, Nigeria, I expected to see the same dynamics at work but found a completely different approach to framing issues adopted by the winning candidate. Ekiti is located in the Southwest region of Nigeria, and it was controlled by then opposition party, the All Progressives Congress, APC. The APC governorship candidate and incumbent Governor Kayode Fayemi had a very strategically executed digital media plan, but his challenger and former governor of the state Ayodele Fayose

of the People's Democracy Party, PDP, had a less planned digital media campaign approach. Before the election, Fayose declared that he was not a fan of social media and that he was a "man of the street" (Fabiya & Olorun, 2014) Yet Fayose won the election, defeating the incumbent in all the local government areas of the state. This was unusual. Governor Fayemi lost even in his own local government.

Mr. Fayose, the winning opposition candidate, framed his candidacy as representative of the "common man" while framing the incumbent as representing the elites. So the contest was not so much between different constituencies for access to state resources as it was between the political elite and the ordinary citizens of the state. He proudly noted in an interviews before the election that as "a man of the people" he would be campaigning on the streets rather than hiding behind social media to avoid meeting ordinary people (Fabiya & Olorun, 2014). In the end, he discreetly used digital media to spread rumors about the incumbent, coordinate campaign activities and distribute financial and food resources to voters. And he won the election with a landslide. The success of the candidate campaign framing and eventual electoral success is possible because the incumbent had gone out of his way to show that he was more interested in being impartial in the use of state resources. I argue that the role digital media played in the election in Ekiti state can be best understood as an amplifier of existing mechanisms in the context they were employed. Digital media's most significant effect on the candidate campaign I studied is to offer them the capacity to spread rumors anonymously and efficiently distribute gifts to potential voters.

The thesis, therefore, bridges the gap between African political science and digital media literature by examining how political elites' uses of digital media technologies interact with socio-political factors in shaping the campaign practices in the 2014 governorship election in

Ekiti state, Nigeria. The thesis investigates how politicians adopted new digital media and other traditional channels of communication for political campaigning – organizing their individual campaign teams, and reaching out to voters. Two aspects of the election campaign process are of particular interest. First, the ways elites framed digital media use in public discourses compared to actual use in campaign strategies, and, second, actual campaign practices in using digital media to reach voters.

This thesis makes four important contributions to political communication literature. First, digital media are often touted as promoting transparency in politics and empowering ordinary citizens to participate politically. The thesis shows that actual effect might be less transparency as their anonymity features allow politicians to spread more false information without taking responsibility for it. This was previously more difficult to achieve before the advent of digital media. Second, by studying political actors who make decisions and coordinate political campaigning, the thesis reveals the motivations and practices of political actors. Third, understanding subnational elections is important because their outcomes usually have more immediate and direct impacts on citizens. It is plausible that these types of elections also have greater impacts on how citizens come to define their role in the democratic process. Fourth, the preceding three processes have significant implications for the shape of an evolving political culture, bearing in mind that multiparty elections only started in Nigeria in 1999, and people are still trying to define their relationship with the political system.

In the following sections, I discuss the political communication literature and African political science literature that informed the study. The background of the election comes next, followed by a description of the methodology adopted for the study. The findings, discussion and conclusion form the final sections.

## CHAPTER 2

# Digital Media in Political Campaigning

Scholars of political communication have shown significant interest in the effect of new digital media tools on political campaigning since the mid-1990s when internet use started to gain traction in the United States. Like earlier technologies, especially radio and television, initial discussions of the role of the internet were laced with hyperbolic descriptions of a digital revolution that was going to radically transform people's experience of politics and their relationships with political leaders and the state. Scholars like Manuel Castells argued that digital media were fundamentally transforming politics by flattening the communication power relations between political actors, and empowering individual actors to be more consequential in national discourse and policymaking (Castells, 1997, 2012). Yet at the turn of the century, only a few years after internet use became commonly used, some scholars had begun to question the revolutionary credentials of digital media in politics (Margolis & Resnick, 2000).

The debate over the role digital media play in political communication has evolved since 2000, and can be categorized into two main opposing views: normalization and equalization. The normalization thesis is often traced to the seminal work of Margolis & Resnick (2000) who argued that digital media, in this case, the internet, do not radically transform politics but their uses follow existing patterns of political relations in the US. Their argument has been supported by a strong body of different types of evidence. The equalization hypothesis, on the other hand, has drawn largely from the work of such scholars as Manuel Castells but has had less empirical support. Scholars have taken up these hypotheses in various forms in research and the results have been as mixed as the types of political actions and events studied.

One strand of scholarship explores whether digital media will transform the relations between the state and citizens (Castells, 1996, 1997, 2012; Morozov, 2012; Shirky, 2009). A related focus is the worry about the capacity digital media afford candidates and campaign organizations to manipulate messages via personalized targeted campaigning. Howard (2005, p. 168) argues that the participation of citizens in politics increasingly takes place in a “highly privatized and often covert sphere” where free exchange of ideas is increasingly difficult to achieve because of vested interests who own and manage the platforms. Howard seems concerned that instead of a “shared text” in the public sphere that allows citizens to engage in informed exchange of ideas, the new private spheres being developed by political campaigns thrive on personalized messages. More recently, Bimber (2014) argues that Obama campaign’s use of analytical software to target voters in hotly contested “swing” states in the 2012 elections was aimed to win the election rather than to engage voters. He asserts that differences in the use of digital media do not matter much for candidates in the US anymore but rather the specific strategies candidates adopt. These strategies, as Stromer-Galley (2013) argues are increasingly “decidedly undemocratic” based on “controlled interactivity,” and as Gibson, Römmele, & Williamson (2014) observe, progressively “data-driven” rather than “citizen-driven.”

Another strand, of particular interest for the purpose of this research, concerns itself with specific practices of political parties and candidates in using digital media to market themselves to voters. Even within this strand, there is no single measure of what normalization and equalization means. Some scholars focus on whether digital media empower small or opposition parties to overcome visibility and resource constraints to compete with ruling parties. Vergeer, Hermans, & Sams (2011) study of European Parliamentary elections in the Netherlands found that candidates who were already favored to win were more likely to use Twitter extensively,

which implies that pattern of use is somehow related to a candidate's confidence in their popularity (Marcinkowski & Metag, 2014, found a similar trend in Germany). Though they could not determine how much Twitter contributed to the electoral victory of the candidates, Vergeer and his colleagues found some interesting trends: progressive and opposition candidates use Twitter more (a similar trend was found in Great Britain by Graham et al., 2014); politicians become less engaging as their followers increase; and given the pattern of followership, it is more likely that Twitter use is more about reinforcing supporters than winning new converts. More scholars have found normalization as the main role of social media (Graham et al., 2014; Lilleker et al., 2011; Norris, 2003; Vaccari, 2013).

Some cases of the equalization effect include Howard Dean's campaign for the US Democratic Party nomination in 2004 (Foot & Schneider, 2006), and Barack Obama's successful campaign for the White House in 2008 (Bimber, 2014; Kreiss, 2012). In many other cases where an opposition candidate uses digital media more actively than the incumbent, there is no guarantee of victory. In fact, cases from Europe do not indicate any significant gains for minority parties because they are either less innovative or less visible because of limited resources (Lilleker et al., 2011; Marcinkowski & Metag, 2014; Mascheroni & Mattoni, 2013).

A subsection of this scholarship of particular relevance for understanding the election in Ekiti concerns itself with the specific digital media practices of political campaigns that reveal campaign goals and strategies, and not necessarily whether they succeed or not. As Bimber (2014) notes, differences in access to technology is becoming insignificant for a country with two almost equally matched parties like the US (two equally strong parties contested the Ekiti election). This approach is even more important for a social context that is barely studied and of which little is known about how politicians deploy digital media for political marketing

purposes. Very little has been written about the use of digital media for political campaigning in Nigeria or Sub-Saharan Africa as a whole.

The literature on digital media and democracy in Africa largely focuses on activist use of the tools for protests and election monitoring (Bailard & Livingston, 2014). Much of the writings on how the internet is “revolutionizing” democracy in Africa are largely anecdotal stories with little empirical data or attention to the mechanisms of the claimed effects. Some scholars (for example, Olabamiji, 2014; Smyth and Best, 2013; Ugor, 2009), however, have begun to do more empirically-grounded studies built around digital media use during election periods. Scholars of political communication are interested in election periods because political activities are heightened and political attitudes and behaviors are much more easily observable.

Some extant literature argues that digital media could enhance better logistical coordination and overall efficiency of elections. For example, Bailard & Livingston (2014) studied online communication during Nigeria’s 2011 general elections and found that online crowd-sourced reports helped electoral officers reallocate resources to areas where there were inadequate materials and so may have affected the overall turnout by ensuring that more people had access to voting materials. It is important to point out, however, that the data they analyzed only shows a correlation between crowd-sourced reports and voter turnouts, which could have happened for completely different reasons such as the level of political interest of voters, or the mobilization effects of a popular local politician who is running for office

A different experimental study of internet users by Bailard (2012) in Tanzania during the country’s election found that online users were more likely to be disillusioned and to not vote. She postulates that it is possible that due to exposure to information online about life in developed countries, some internet users may consider their own political system so bad that it

does not deserve participation. This argument, however, seems to assume that people do not already use other means (like watching international satellite television stations) that expose them to Western economic development as much as internet could have done.

But the research is interesting for showing that rather than motivate people to vote, the internet may be having a “window opening” effects as Bailard (2012: 333) put it, that discourages voting.

To Smyth and Best (2013), social media use in Liberia and Nigeria helped fill the gap of inadequate traditional media presence around the countries while acting as watchdogs over politicians who might otherwise attempt to rig the elections. They also argue that the speed of information sharing on social media may have reduced the level of suspicion of malpractices and ensured broader acceptance of election results. The authors acknowledge, however, that these benefits were only available to elites and politically active young people in relatively urban areas. The large majority of citizens of both countries may not have even heard about social media, let alone benefit from their use.

Two significant events that took place after elections in Nigeria and Liberia also merit consideration. Though observer reports indicated that the elections were free and fair, post-election violence broke out in northern Nigeria claiming hundreds of lives, while a smaller-scale violence erupted in Liberia and diffused because of quick international intervention (BBC, 2011; Lewis, 2011; Tar and Zack-Williams, 2007). This raises the question, as Lewis (2011) poses in the case of Nigeria, why more transparent elections are leading to more violence. Lewis argues that unmanaged suspicious relations between religious and ethnic groups easily ignited violence despite a generally transparent electoral process.

So how could we study the use of digital media by politicians in this mix of issues that are significantly different from Western societies where the majority of the literature on the topic

is currently situated? A seminal work by Foot and Schneider (2006) provide a suitable theoretical framework for this work. Using extensive data from campaign websites for the 2000, 2002, and 2004 elections in the US, the scholars identified four practices of political campaigns – informing, involving, connecting, and mobilizing – that they argue campaigns engage in to win votes. By identifying practices common to all campaigns, the scholars provide a framework for assessing campaign behaviors across different context. While different techniques may be observed in different contexts, the practices are broad categories they may fit into.

Informing features are "online structures" aimed at making information readily available to voters. These features of the websites aim to present information in the best way possible for audience consumption. Involving features enable website visitors to engage with the campaign organization like subscribing to newsletters and donating money. Connecting features act as a way for site visitors to engage a third party like a government agency or an opponent in furtherance of a campaign's goals. Finally, mobilizing features allow website visitors to recruit other actors or take a particular favorable course of action on behalf of, or in furtherance of the goals of, the campaign organization.

Foot & Schneider (2006) argue that political campaigns can be best understood as "sociotechnical networks" in which the social and the technical are intertwined and understanding the whole is more valuable than understanding its parts. This research builds off this in exploring how politicians used digital media in the election in Ekiti state, Nigeria. Looking at digital media use in the election (and the outcome) without understanding how the social shaped the adoption and utilization of the technical creates the impression of an absurd situation. But when the social context of the election is taken into consideration, the strategies and decisions of the political actors make sense. The decision of the winning candidate to

rhetorically distance himself from digital media while using same tools discreetly makes sense only in the way he framed his opponent.

This research is therefore guided by an overriding question of what impact digital media have on politics in Sub-Saharan Africa. In the tracing impact, I was interested more in how digital media interact with context to shape practices than whether digital media helped a candidate win the election or not. How did candidates use SMS and social media for campaigning? What does this tell use about subnational elections in rural Nigeria? Additionally, what do the practices observable in Ekiti tell us about digital media and campaigning in transitional democracies?

## CHAPTER 3

### Background of the Election

Nigeria is Africa's most populous country with an estimated 170 million population. It also has its largest economy with a GDP of over US \$500 billion, projected to reach US \$1 trillion by 2030 if the current annual growth rate of 7% is maintained (Economist, 2014; Kozłowska, 2015). The country was a British colony until 1960 when it gained independence, and experienced intermittent military coups starting in 1966 until 1999 when the current democratic regime began. It is divided into six geopolitical zones and 36 semi-autonomous states patterned after the American system with elected governors as the chief executives of their states. State governors are very powerful in Nigeria and control a sizable budget and are responsible for most of the day-to-day running of their states. Governors generally have a huge impact on the lives of state residents. The amount of power wielded by state governors makes the battle for the governorship seat very important to political parties because it is usually possible for governors to influence the outcome of elections in their states, and they could punish an unfriendly president in a general election. This explains, as several interviewees mentioned during the fieldwork, the PDP-led federal government's efforts to ensure that its party candidate won in Ekiti state as it would make it easier for the president to win the state in the presidential election scheduled for March 2015. The June 2014 election was between the incumbent APC candidate Kayode Fayemi and his challenge Ayodele Fayose of the PDP.

The PDP has won all presidential elections since 1999 when Nigeria returned to democratic rule. Former military generals and other powerful politicians in the country formed it in 1998 and continue to wield some control over its affairs and of the country through it. It won

the first presidential elections in 1999 and subsequent ones in 2003, 2007 and 2011. The party, like other parties in country has no clear ideology but has been described as “conservative” in opposition to the self-described “progressive” APC. Yet, looking at their economic and social policies, there is no indication that one is more pro-market than the other or even more socially conservative than the others. Over the years, the PDP perfected a complex web of clientelism that in many parts of the country, ordinary citizens renamed its slogan “Power to the People” to “Share the Money” — a veiled reference to revenue from crude oil sale that the PDP-led federal government uses to oils its clientele machinery (Idowu & Etinosa, 2013).

Mr. Ayodele Fayose was a former governor of Ekiti state who was impeached in 2006 on the allegations of embezzling state funds meant for the state poultry farm. The Nigerian anticorruption agency, the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) brought charges against him that were not yet conclusively decided as at the time of the election. Though he claims to have a polytechnic diploma, the opposition contended that he did not actually graduate, and used that as part of its campaign message to frame him as a thug unfit to lead the state. The primary election that handed Fayose the party’s ticket to contest the election was also problematic. The leaders of the party in the state had agreed to choose a candidate based on consensus and it was clear to Fayose that he would not win the support of the other aspirants. He pushed for a primary, boycotted by some aspirants, and he won (Odufowokan & Salawudeen, 2014). Because the PDP-controlled federal government was interested in winning the election to make an inroad into the south west before the presidential election scheduled for the following year, President Goodluck Jonathan called a meeting of the main aspirants who lost and promised them federal government positions if they supported Fayose to win the election.

Mr Kayode Fayemi of the APC who was the incumbent during the election won the state in 2010, after the Nigerian Supreme Court overturned the election of a PDP candidate Segun Oni on the grounds of electoral malpractices. The initial election had been conducted in 2007. Mr Kayode was educated at the University of Lagos and Obafemi Awolowo University in Nigeria, and received a PhD from Kings College London. His official profile shows he was involved in the prodemocracy movements of the 1990s when Nigeria was still under military rule, in addition to having worked with several international organizations. His professional achievements allowed him to frame himself as an educated candidate against a poorly educated “thug” who had no idea of good governance. It also allowed the opposition to frame him as an elitist leader who was out of touch with the people and could hardly speak the local Ekiti dialect.

At the beginning of the campaign, it looked as if it was going to be a one-sided contest that would be easily won by Fayemi but in the end Fayose won the election, defeating the incumbent in all the 16 local government areas of the state. Newspaper headlines the day after election results were announced expressed shock and disbelief; social media users were in mourning; and analysts around the country tried to make sense of what had happened in Ekiti. How could an incumbent who was generally considered to have done well in good governance fail so miserably? None of the usual factors of Nigerian politics explain the election outcome – the pattern of voting defied existing patterns of block voting associated with Nigerian politics, and the incumbent governor had extensive access to traditional and digital media much more than his challenger. How did it happen and what does it tell us about digital media role in candidate marketing in the election?

# CHAPTER 4

## Methodology

To investigate the uses of digital media in political campaigning in a subnational election in Nigeria, I conducted: a) interviews with main political actors; and b) qualitative content analysis of news content and a range of digital artifacts produced by the contesting political parties, candidates and other political actors.

**Interviews:** Elections are high-stakes events and politicians are usually so invested in trying to win that they hardly have any time for activities not connected to their success. So, most of the research conducted was in an atmosphere of frenzied activities at the Spotless Hotel headquarters of the Ayodele Fayose Campaign Organization in Ado Ekiti, the Ekiti state capital while a few others were conducted at different locations within the state capital. I adopted a snowball sampling approach to select interviewees. Keyton (2014, p. 116) describes snowball or network sampling as “a nonprobability sampling technique (where)...participants help researchers obtain their sample by identifying other similar participants.” She explains that this technique is particularly useful where the population of interest is “difficult to find” (Keyton, 2014, p. 116). In the case of the election, the members of the campaign team responsible for various responsibilities were not easily available, and finding them close to the election was very difficult. So network sampling enabled me to utilize the recommendation power of interviewees to get more participants. In this case, participants recommended who else they thought should be interviewed as well as giving me their phones numbers and information about the best time to find them.

For example, the one of the interviews was conducted two days before the election. I arrived at the gate of Spotless Hotel a few minutes past 8am and the place was already busy with people who were trying to get into the compound. The gate was locked with anti-riot policemen stood guard to coordinate people going into the hotel compound. I approached the policemen and explained that I was a researcher and had permission from the chairman of the campaign committee to go inside. They would have none of it and demanded that I call someone in the campaign to come and identify me. I called my contact person and he came to identify me and I was let in. My guide asked me to sit somewhere in the compound and he would let me know if any campaign team member came in (I did not know any of them so I had to rely on the insider who was at the hotel throughout the election period). I sat down and took notes of events happening within the compound.

About three hours later, he came and pointed at someone he identified as top leader in the campaign. I approached the man and introduced myself and asked if I could interview him. He told me he did not have sufficient time but gave me his number and promised to talk to me later that day. He left the compound. At about 2:30pm I saw him return to the compound and approached him to ask for the interview. He obliged but said he could only do 15 minutes. He found a room and ordered everyone to either leave or be quiet. We talked for 50 minutes. At the end of the interview, I asked for recommendations. He gave me the names and phone numbers of some of his team members and said I should tell them he recommended them to me. After each interview, I would always ask who the interviewee thinks I should talk to, especially to address an issue he/she did not address very well.

A second way I did interviews was to just approach people and try to start a conversation at the campaign headquarters. I would then ask about, for example, who their leader is or if there

are other leaders in the compound they can recognize. Once they point at someone, I would approach the person and ask for an interview. This way, I did most of the interviews with local campaign leaders and foot soldiers. Most people were very helpful once they realized that I was doing research, and eagerly walked with me to hunt for campaign leaders. Once we identify a potential interviewee, I would approach the person as if no one had helped me identify them, and introduce myself.

The questions I posed to each interviewee varied depending on their role in the campaign. Generally, I started by asking them general questions about how the campaign was going and what their responsibilities were. I then moved on to questions about media coverage and finally digital media. This was necessary because telling people exactly what I was interested in could inadvertently influence them to tell me what they thought I wanted to hear, and maybe even try to locate themselves in the technologies I was interested. While I always ended up asking more questions about digital media use, the preliminary questions served to balance out any over exaggeration of one aspect of the campaign to impress a researcher.

Furthermore, the team responsible for core decision-making in the campaign was very small, about five of them (only three were identified and interviewed though some interviewees said there were two others whom I never saw despite staying in the campaign headquarters for a few days). In the end, I interviewed three of the top campaign leaders in addition to other party leaders over the course of one week. The table below shows the various profiles of those interviewed. All the interviews, except one, were conducted in-person at the Spotless Hotel in Ado-Ekiti from June 17 – 25, 2014 and other locations within the state capital. The interviews were unstructured with only a few prepared questions and follow up questions were then asked based on the interviewee's role in the campaign. The interviews were recorded with the aid of a

digital audio recorder and then downloaded to my laptop. The files were then uploaded to Dropbox and deleted from the recorder in order to ensure that even if anything happened to the recorder, the integrity of the recordings and the confidentiality of the interviews would be preserved.

**Table 1.0: Categories of Interviewee Profiles**

Leadership level	Number
Core state campaign leaders	3
State campaign staffers	2
Local campaign leaders	4
Foot soldier	1
Loosely affiliated <sup>1</sup> leaders in the state	3
Loosely affiliated youth leaders	3
Total	16

Data analysis started with transcribing the interviews and printing them out. They were then coded to identify various types of strategies and media types interviewees mentioned, paying particular attention to keywords that best describe how a medium was used in the election. At the end of this process, the main uses of digital media were identified. A second level of coding regrouped the initial coding into fewer broader groups that represent practices

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<sup>1</sup> The term “loosely affiliated” is used to describe those who were involved with the campaign but could not publicly acknowledge it because of their jobs in the civil service. Civil servants are required to be non-partisan in Nigeria.

bearing in mind the four practices of political campaigning identified by Foot & Schneider (2006).

**News Articles and Artifacts:** The second source of data is a qualitative analysis of a range of digital artifacts including 550 print newspaper articles, over 400 online articles collected via Google alert for “Ekiti,” screenshots of tweets, online pictures, SMS text messages, and other social media archives. The purpose of the qualitative analysis is to identify the frames used by the candidates and their parties as captured by journalists and bloggers, which provides a window into the issues that were discussed around the election. This process was supplemented by interviews conducted as part of the research. The analysis of these sources was triangulated to corroborate or correct one another. In some cases, the interviews provided a better understanding of the motivations and calculations of the issues represented in the artifacts. This helps to provide a deeper and more accurate picture of the events surrounding the election as well as the motivations of the actors behind them.

**Conceptual definition:** Digital media, as used in this thesis, refers to SMS and social media, primarily Facebook and Twitter. While various definitions and conceptualizations of what constitutes “digital media” exist (see Manovich, 2001), the most commonly available “digital media” in the state where the study was done are the ones mentioned above.

## **Ethical Considerations**

The first step taken before going to Nigeria for the research was to apply to the University of Washington Institutional Review Board (IRB) for a review and approval of my research plan to ensure that it complies with requirements for dealing with human subjects. While in the field, effort was made to obtain the informed consent of interviewees and ensure that they understood the general goals of the research and how their data would be used. The

second consideration was ensuring the anonymity and confidentiality of interviews. Besides informing interviewees that the interviews would be securely handled, which encouraged them to be more open with me, I ensured that the data collected were handled securely and anonymously.

**Table 2.0: Table : Reviewed Articles by Print Publications (June 19-25, 2014)**

Newspaper	Reach/Coverage	Total Articles
Vanguard	National	36
Punch	National	76
Daily Independent	National	43
Daily Newswatch	National	44
Nigerian Tribune	National	82
Leadership	National	35
The Nation	National	70
ThisDay	National	15
National Mirror	National	52
The Sun	National	52
The Guardian	National	46
Total		551

The data collected and analyzed may be skewed towards men's view of the election and their participation in it. This is partially because the composition of the election campaign

organization and local leaders was overwhelmingly male. As a result, only six percent of interviewees were female because there was only one female in the campaign organization. So while not many female voices are represented in the interviews, the data are however representative of the make up of the campaign organization and the political structure of the party in the state.

# CHAPTER 5

## Findings

### Candidate and Media Framing of the Election

Framing is one of the most studied media effects theories in communication research. Entman (1993, p. 52) describes framing as revolving around “selection and salience.” He explains the goal of framing is to “promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation and/or treatment recommendation.” To Entman (1993), framing involves attempting to influence the entire chain of reasoning that leads to decision making such that the audience is encouraged to look at a problem from a particular perspective, analyze it using certain criteria and find certain types of solutions to it. In analyzing interviews and artifacts about the election, it is clear that both candidates actively engaged in framing each other for the purpose of influencing voters. Both candidates framed the election in two interrelated ways.

First, the two candidates sought to frame each other in terms of closeness to the people and the likelihood of performing well as the chief executive of the state. While the opposition candidate, Ayodele Fayose campaign attempted to portray the incumbent Governor Kayode Fayemi as an elitist leader who did not care about the residents of the state, the Fayemi campaign tried rather unsuccessfully to portray Fayose as a thug unfit to lead the state. Fayose’s team campaign stressed in their mobilization messages that Governor Fayemi was a leader whose only interest was executing projects that benefited the elites and not the common man. Though the incumbent had “done well” by Nigerian standards by undertaking various infrastructural projects in the state, especially in the area of road construction, his challenger portrayed the projects as elitist because poor people do not have cars to drive on the roads. He argued in campaign

materials that Governor Fayemi may have built roads, but he had failed to address *stomach infrastructure*.

The discourse around “stomach infrastructure” is important because it played a huge part in deciding the electoral victory of Mr. Fayose. To the Fayemi campaign and his supporters on social media and blogs, *stomach infrastructure* is equivalent to corruptly buying voters with gifts. But interviews with people outside of both campaigns portrayed a different picture: Voters and some local leaders argued that *stomach infrastructure* goes beyond gifts (though they could be a part of it) to government efforts to create an enabling environment for ordinary people on the street to make a living. One example is giving contracts to local contractors who would employ residents of the state and create employment opportunities for young people in the state. Rather, they argued, Governor Fayemi awarded contracts to people in Lagos whom his party leader Ahmed Bola Tinubu recommended. In other words, while building physical infrastructure in the state, the incumbent was exporting jobs to Lagos, thereby destroying *stomach infrastructure* in the state. Supporters of the incumbent argued that local contractors were not qualified to carry out some of his high tech projects in the state and were less likely to complete contracts awarded to them (Fabiya & Olorok, 2014). Thus, instead of defining “us” against “them” in terms of ethnic identities or districts of residence, the winning candidate successfully defined the “them” as the political elites whom the incumbent represented, and the “us” as the “common man” whom he represented.

Fayose, the narrative goes, as *a man of the people*, interacted with them face-to-face and tried to understand and solve their problems unlike the incumbent who was detached from the people. Media interviews with several voters after the election indicate that many voters bought the frame and viewed the incumbent as being “too uppity for their liking” (Ibekwe, 2014). Many

potential voters cited this as a reason they would vote for Fayose in short, informal chat with the researcher before the election. In analyzing news reports and campaign artifacts including pictures of campaign events, there was little difference in how each of the candidates campaigned. Fayose's image as a man of the people was burnished by repeated stories of a few events: Fayose went to eat at a low key restaurant in town and bought food for everyone who had come to eat there, he stopped his convoy in the street to greet an elderly person and gave him some money, he sent mobile phone recharge airtime of less than \$10 to a random person stranger who requested help. These widely publicized gestures, though few and far between, endeared him to the people as a politician who was genuinely interested in poor people and who valued them as equally important as the rich.

A second frame used by both political parties and closely related to the first is whether digital media were relevant for campaigning in a state with low internet use. For example, Fayose noted before the election that he was "not a social media person" but "a grassroots politician" who lived "in the village" (Fabiya & Olokori, 2014; Famutimi, 2014; Suleiman, 2014). In statements and interviews before the election, his team sought to portray digital media users as elites who did not care about the common man. The idea of the "common man" was central to Fayose's campaign because it emphasized not just the voters but also implied that Fayose was a member of that group. He was, it suggests, their champion against the elites. The incumbent's approach to campaigning and to relating with people in the state according to interviewees can be best described as cerebral — detached, distanced, and goal-oriented. Interviewees described a governor who was more interested in doing *his job* as he interpreted it than empathizing with the people he led. Though he was on several social media platforms, he was considered inaccessible to ordinary people. The Fayose campaign capitalized on this to frame his impressive

use of social media for campaign as another sign that he was more interested in talking to “elites” who are educated and probably not living in the state. By defining himself in opposition to an aloof leader, Fayose effectively cemented his image as a man of the people whom many voters claimed to be able to trust.

## **A Social Media Election in a Rural State**

The Fayose campaign, having framed their candidate as a “grassroots politician” who understands the needs of the people, used social media sparingly. Fayose joined Twitter on March 25, 2014, a day after the *Punch* newspaper ran a story on the election campaign and noted that only the incumbent Kayode Fayemi had social media accounts (Famutimi, 2014). In the following weeks before the election, the tweeting pattern from the [@GovAyoFayose](#) handle was very irregular. There were some days when there was no tweet and some with as many as 10 tweets. Generally, it seemed like the account was managed by someone who also had another significant assignment within the campaign and so would only update it irregularly. A senior campaign staffer who should know if they used Twitter denied to me that the account did not exist, underscoring how low they prioritized it in their overall campaign strategy. On Facebook, there was no official account associated with the Fayose Campaign though there were a few accounts and grounds promoting the candidate and encouraging friends to vote him.

The tweets from [@GovAyoFayose](#) account officially associated with the candidate were full of appreciative words for supporters who were “standing by him” in spite of elite conspiracy<sup>2</sup>. He also copiously used Bible verses in the tweets to allude to being chosen by God for the job such that humans have no choice but to support him. Some of the tweets were accusations against the incumbent governor for being too authoritarian and uncaring. In others,

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<sup>2</sup> Please see attached appendix for screenshots of samples of tweets

the candidate defended himself against allegations of thuggery. A general theme that runs through most of his tweets is the same framing of being the underdog candidate of “the people” ignored by the elites represented by the incumbent.

## **Digital Media Practices**

If the way candidate Ayodele Fayose framed himself and his opponent in the election influenced his choice of campaign media, what does it reveal about his campaign’s media practices? The main practices with which the Fayose Campaign Organization engaged digital media were informing and involving. Its techniques for informing included coordinating, misinforming and rumor-mongering, while involving techniques included seeking and giving favors.

## **Coordinating Campaign Activities**

The Fayose campaign adopted two techniques in the use of SMS and social media for disseminating informing about its candidate or against the opposition. In the context of this election, SMS is considered differently from social media because it was used by the campaign in a generally one-way process where they pushed messages as bulk SMS with no possibility of receiving any instant or direct replies from the receivers. Though they claim that people sent feedback to local party officials that were forwarded to the headquarters, there was no organized platform or strategy for receiving feedback on the SMS messages they pushed. The campaign used the official PDP’s Bulk SMS account to send instructions about upcoming rallies or to debunk rumors to only PDP members who had volunteered their phone numbers to receive SMS from the party. A senior campaign staffer explains how they used SMS for informing people: “We don’t give out information on campaign issues via SMS. We only use it primarily for notices of meetings and rallies, and to get people alerted on certain decisions of the ruling

government. Even before the campaign we had been running it to inform our people about meetings. It is like our notice board.”

The campaign team saw SMS as suitable for conveying short and uncomplicated messages that give people updates about what the Fayose candidate was up to, and how they can participate. In this respect, SMS was used as a “notice board” to make announcements to which people are expected to act but in which they were not necessarily allowed a voice. On Facebook, supporters and paid proxies working for the campaign would post pictures of campaign rallies with the goal of creating an impression that Fayose was gaining momentum. The “notice board” is about the best description of how social media were used to spread information. The official [@GovAyoFayose](#) Twitter account also carried some campaign messages that were much less visual than the Facebook posts by supporters.

But how does the campaign explain the obvious contradiction of using social media and SMS after the candidate claimed that both were irrelevant to his campaign? He had stated after winning the primary election that:

*I am not a social media person, I am a grassroots politician and I live in the village. I spend 80 per cent of my time in the village. I have not been to Lagos now for more than four weeks. Talking of social media, how many people have telephone in my village?*

*There is no light to charge the telephones most times (Famutimi, 2014).*

A senior staffer who participated in decision-making explains why they cared about social media despite official rhetoric:

*Because the small number of people using social media are the elites and they have a sort of control over the masses. Because we have a society that beliefs in the culture of respect, giving a kind of honor to the elites, whatever the elites tell them, they tend to*

*believe...so whatever people read on social media, they can add to and give back to the people. That's why we are concerned and want to also influence what gets discussed on social media. So we believe that it has a direct impact, no matter how small, on the people.*

On the one hand, the campaign was eager to portray itself as being connected to the people, reaching people where they are and interacting with them face-to-face. On the other hand, the campaign was worried that not using social media could have some unknown consequences. To manage this dilemma, the campaign outsourced its social media activities while continuing the rhetoric of being a street-centered campaign. This way, they hoped to minimize the possibility of losing votes while maintaining their framing of the incumbent. According to estimates by several campaign staffers, the amount spent on outsourcing social media was significantly smaller than other channels like street campaigns and radio advertising. Similarly, Marcinkowski & Metag (2014, p. 161) found in their study of social media use for political campaigning in Germany that many candidates did not necessarily consider social media effective for mobilizing votes but were nevertheless scared of losing votes if they did not use them.

The Fayose campaign embraced SMS text messaging as its preferred method of reaching people besides radio since many people in the state have access to mobile phones either directly or through family and friends. Most phones available in rural Nigeria do not have internet capability. Though no official subscriber statistics is available about the state, a bulk SMS seller ufumes.com claims on its website to have the numbers of 420,000 mobile phone subscribers in the state out of 142 million active subscribers in Nigeria according to the government statistics (NCC, 2015).

## Spreading Rumors via SMS

The campaign was also actively, though covertly, involved in using proxies to send out messages they considered too risky to be officially associated with Fayose or the PDP. These could be rumors of impending sacking of civil servants, or allegations of misconduct against the incumbent. For example, a day before the election, an SMS was sent to several phone numbers with a screen name of the third party, Labor Party, that its standard-bearer Bamidele Opeyemi had stepped down for PDP's Ayodele Fayose and encouraged supporters to vote for him. While Mr. Opeyemi immediately denied sending out the message and told his supporters to disregard it (Suleiman, 2014), the damage may have been done. For some voters, there could be no smoke without fire – there might have been an informal agreement between the two candidates that Opeyemi was refusing to acknowledge publicly, and they saw that as a form of tacit endorsement of Fayose for the election. The Fayose campaign team publicly denied sending the SMS but many campaign staffers acknowledged it as a “normal thing.” Their admission contrasts with campaign staffers interviewed by Foot & Schneider (2006) who were only worried about countering rumors and not spreading them. It is however plausible that politicians in the U.S. are more unlikely to acknowledge spreading rumors hence their hesitance to acknowledge using their online tools to spread rumors.

This raises interesting questions about the political economy of SMS use in the Nigerian election. Why was SMS such a convenient and effective tool for spreading rumors? In what ways are rumors spread via SMS different from other forms of media, and why did it appeal specifically to the Fayose campaign? First, it is important to note that the Fayemi campaign used bulk SMS and regularly sent out messages to its subscribers, though it was not possible to confirm how many voters subscribed to it. The usefulness of SMS to the Fayose campaign,

according to a high ranking member of the campaign is that it allowed them to “use (it) primarily for notices of meetings and rallies, and to get people alerted on certain decisions of the ruling government.” The “certain decisions” turns out to be mainly rumors as the interviewee explains further:

*...because we know it could damage the respect we already have from our people, we decided not to use it (official SMS account) ... So we gave some of our members the opportunity to do it for us. We gave them some of the numbers in our database but they won't run it on our official accounts... Because we are thinking of when we have to use it in the future after the election, we don't want it to lose credibility.*

The implication of this strategy is that unlike other media that the campaign would have to officially pay for and could be easily identified with, they were able to run SMS using proxies who though are party members operated in an unofficial capacity. And the campaign could always point to the SMS during official campaign events as a sign that there can be no “smoke without a fire.” Besides anonymity, SMS is difficult to regulate because one does not need to go through telecom companies to send bulk SMS. There are several vendors online who offer prices that beat normal SMS rates, and were used with little oversight from regulators. This way, the campaign was able to use a medium that is cheap, anonymous, easily accessible, and has a wide reach in the state. The interviewee claimed that they had “like four to five” proxy accounts each with one – two million SMS credits to run 5 – 10 times per week. Subsequent election campaigns practices in Nigeria in 2015 suggest that it is becoming a feature of election campaigning to use bulk SMS to reach voters, and in many cases to misinform.

## Sharing (Building?) Stomach Infrastructure

The most publicized campaign practice of the Fayose campaign that attracted national attention after Fayose won the election is seeking and giving favors, or as the media scornfully described giving of gifts to voters, *stomach infrastructure*. Fayose first used the term as part of his framing of himself as a caring politician in contrast to the incumbent who unconcerned about the people of the state. Campaign staffers argued that he meant that the incumbent Governor Fayemi had built roads and other critical infrastructure in the state but had not done enough to ensure that people had enough food on their table. So as opposed to providing just physical infrastructure, which is mostly useful to elites who have cars and live in the main town of Ado Ekiti, Fayose would provide a means for ordinary people to meet immediate basic needs like food. To establish his credibility and prove that he would work for the “common man,” he distributed bags of rice and money to people. The information about where and how to collect the bags of rice being distributed was sent via SMS, a medium that allowed him to target specifically identified voters.

Supporters who thronged the rice distribution center would call or send SMS to family and friends at home to come and collect their share of the rice. To receive a bag of rice and/or money, voters were required to show that they had permanent voter cards and are able to vote. Campaign staffers shared stories of supporters contacting them or the candidate to ask for mobile phone airtime top-ups, which they gladly obliged, to help solidify the image of Fayose as a man of the people. Review of social media artifacts and the researcher’s chat with people in the state indicates that the incumbent also distributed gifts but was covert about it because of his national reputation as a credible politician. As one of his supporters told me a day after the election, “Forget about that story. Fayemi also distributed stuff but the people’s minds were made up.

## CHAPTER 6

### Discussion and Analysis

The research has some limitations. First, all but one of the interviewees are male. This may have provided a male-centric view of the election and the campaigns. But the problem stems from the male dominated team that ran the campaign. There was only one female in the core leadership of the campaign, and all the lower level leaders who were recommended to me for interviews by the campaign members I interviewed were male. Despite making some efforts to include more female views, it was practically impossible. Second, the research only focuses on one party instead of the two proposed at the beginning of the research. Again, this was a child of necessity. Though I had informed the APC of my intention to interview their members, I was not granted access to any of their campaign team members once I got to Ado-Ekiti. After trying several times, and visiting the party headquarters, I decided in consultation with my advisor to focus on a single political party and provide a more in-depth analysis of their campaign practices.

These limitations notwithstanding, the research makes very important contributions to digital media literature as well as African political science literature. First, it shows that for many top politicians and lower rank members of the campaign organization, digital media use was seen as an opportunity to reach voters and not necessarily for voters to reach them. While a few acknowledged receiving text messages on their personal phones about potentially harmful incidents that they were able to address swiftly, they did not necessarily view the various platforms as a democratic opportunity to engage voters. Ideally, digital media would encourage interactions between voters and candidates.

For the Fayose campaign team, using social media and SMS was about having a cheap means to engage in informing practices, which include spreading rumors about the incumbent governor and countering allegations against their candidate. They primarily used SMS and social media platforms via proxies to spread rumors about the incumbent without bearing the burden of proof. Unlike traditional media where messages can be traced to specific people, digital media lend themselves to anonymous sharing of information that no one is ultimately responsible for but which could have some impacts on who voters decided to vote for. Nigeria has a relatively strong broadcast media regulation that makes it risky for a radio or a television station to broadcast rumors. It could be forced off air and possibly fined. The relatively less regulated print media has very limited reach in the state. So because it is less regulated and offers anonymity, it provided a potent means of spreading rumors about opponents that was previously impossible.

Additionally, one party official argued that in order to win, it is important to ensure that there is a “balance in the political process,” a veiled reference to the widespread practice in the country of pre-election elite negotiations to ensure that major stakeholders are “settled” in some way to win their support (Berman et al., 2004; Lindberg, 2003). The PDP had to placate the most popular candidate who lost the primaries to Ayo Fayose, Prince Dayo Adeyeye, with a ministerial appointment in the federal government to secure his support, while other strategic appointments and promises of appointments were made to appease popular politicians who might pose a threat to Fayose’ election bid. These moves were possible in the state because Fayose’s party, the PDP, controlled the federal government and President Goodluck Jonathan was eager to offer support to Fayose to win the elections as a way of strengthening his support base for a possible reelection bid in the 2015 presidential election.

Yet these moves do not necessarily explain why the incumbent lost in all local governments areas, including his own. A campaign staffer from the incumbent's home local government area explained that they did not support him because he refused to support the location of a federal university in the local government, which they consider a betrayal by their own "son." For many in Nigeria, the incentive for voting one's kinsman is that they would influence opportunities like the location of advantageous facilities and institutions to his people. Fayemi was more interested in what he considered to be objective allocation of resources. They did not forgive him. The incumbent also faced serious challenges from some entrenched interests in the civil service who felt the reforms he instituted were aimed at weakening them and cutting off the (usually) illegal sources of income the system allowed. A retired top civil servant explained that some top civil servants used their personal funds to campaign against the incumbent.

This situation also provided sufficient fodder for rumors generated and spread by the Fayose campaign about plans by the incumbent to retrench civil servants if reelected. Other complaints against the incumbent include outsourcing contracts to contractors in the metropolitan city of Lagos where the incumbent's APC is strongest and so exporting jobs while his people suffered; he was considered inaccessible to most ordinary people despite his active use of social media; he was perceived as arrogant in that he assumed to know what is best for the people instead of listening to their needs; and he appointed technocrats rather than politicians into his cabinet (most of whom had no support base in their local constituencies). The opposition was able to effectively use these grievances to frame the Kayode Fayemi administration as an elitist government that was out of touch with the people and did not deserve a second term.

Contrary to received wisdom about how digital media interact with elections, the major role of digital media in the election was “frame amplification” (Lim, 2012, p. 242) and enhancement of existing socio-political processes. Social media and SMS allowed the Fayose campaign to target and reach people with their framing of the incumbent at a scale and speed that was probably impossible in the past. The existing sociopolitical context of the election shaped how the winning candidate framed himself and his opponent, and his choice of digital tools for engaging voters during campaign for the election.

# CHAPTER 7

## Conclusion

The Ekiti state governorship election presents an interesting case for the study of the interaction between local politics and digital media use in a transitional democracy. The election was fought by two main parties and was won by the opposition candidate who made minimal use of digital media. The purpose of the study was not to find out whether digital media contributed to the victory of the winning candidate but to analyze the rhetoric and campaign practices of the winning candidate around digital media. Using a combination of interviews and a qualitative analysis of newspapers and other digital artifacts, the study reveals the frames and practices around the election in a state with high mobile phone penetration but low internet access.

First, the winning candidate Ayodele Fayose of the PDP drew from the existing sociopolitical issues surrounding the election to frame the incumbent Kayode Fayemi of the APC as elitist and out of touch with ordinary citizens of the state. Fayose, from the outset of the campaign, made it clear that he saw himself more as a grassroots politician connected to the people and their lived experiences rather than an elitist politician who would depend on social media to communicate with people who may not have access to the internet. From this perspective, social media became another tool of talking over majority of voters who neither had access nor have the computer literacy to participate in the discussions. In spite of this framing, the campaign used paid and volunteer proxies to post campaign updates on Facebook and Twitter with pictures of campaign rallies. This was informed by the campaign's fear that they may lose votes by not having any presence on social media at all. Marcinkowski & Metag (2014) found

that politicians in Germany also used social media even when they believe them to be ineffective because of the fear of *losing* votes rather than any real hope of *gaining* new supporters.

Second, the Fayose campaign use of social media and mobile phone embodies practices of informing and involving via some techniques beyond those identified by Foot and Schneider (2006). The campaign believed that SMS messages were too short to convey campaign messages so they restricted SMS to spreading information about upcoming campaign events or to debunk rumors about the candidate. The SMS campaign had two components – one official account for coordinating rallies, and a second maintained through proxies that sent out rumors and other types of information the campaign considered too risky to be officially associated with them. For the most part, the main use of SMS was for either spreading rumors (via proxies) or countering them via official party account. Lower level campaign staffers and neighborhood leaders associated with the campaign engaged in the practice of involving by using SMS to coordinate the distribution of foodstuff and other favors meant to get people excited about the candidate. SMS played a huge part in coordinating the success of what became known as *stomach infrastructure* as the candidate sought higher favorability ranking through the distribution of gifts like bags of rice, mobile phone airtime, and cash. This is a different technique from those earlier identified by Foot and Schneider (2006), and reflects the specific context in which the election was contested and won.

The findings of this research suggest that digital media played a normalization role in the election by amplifying existing sociopolitical processes of political relations in Ekiti state. SMS made it possible for the politicians to reach voters but not the for voters to reach politicians, which is important because the crux of the Fayose campaign is that he would be an accessible leader. Yet his adaptation of SMS for campaigning had little room for direct feedback. Even if

the campaign had other ways of receiving feedback as they claim, it is noteworthy that the digital media platform they adopted was used in a way that precluded feedback. It is debatable that the design of the technology influenced how the campaign used it but it would be unhelpful to ignore how the affordances of the technology encouraged certain types of behavior. The campaign could have used other techniques to spread rumors (with less effectiveness, perhaps), for example. But the fact that the technology lends itself so easily to undemocratic use would seem to confirm the fears of scholars like Morozov (2012) who claim that digital media are more likely to serve anti-democratic efforts than democratic ones. The uses of SMS and other digital media platforms in the election, however, suggests that the most important role of digital media is amplifying the existing processes of contesting for elections and patterns of power relations between and among elites and voters.

Political smearing of opponents dates back centuries in the U.S., for example, and one of America's most recognizable presidents Thomas Jefferson was the target of (often anonymous) rumors that alleged that he was not a Christian and should not be trusted with the presidency of the country (Lerche, 1948). Barack Obama was not spared a similar treatment in 2008 with several anonymous accusations ranging from being a secret Muslim to being an Antichrist. Weeks & Garrett (2014) found from a survey of 600 people immediately after the 2008 election that believing rumors about a candidate was correlated with less likelihood of voting for the candidate but there is a catch: voters were more likely to believe rumors about a candidate they do not support. In other words, rumors work best if a voter is already biased against a candidate. This explains why rumors tapping into the fears of civil servants and other groups who were already apprehensive about Governor Fayemi's government in Ekiti were effective.

A major difference between these rumors and those observed in Ekiti is that in the U.S., official campaign staffers are unlikely to be directly involved in or directly delegate someone to spread rumors. The function is left to party activists who have no direct connection to campaigns but who have an invested interest in their party candidate's winning an election. In Nigeria, the studied campaign directly delegated the function of generating and spreading rumors to proxies. Equally noteworthy is that the campaign shared user data with the proxies to prosecute the rumormongering. Such a move would be too risky for a party in the U.S. or any advanced democracy because if discovered, it would be a great scandal that could significantly affect a candidate negatively. In Nigeria, as many transitional democracies, the stage of transition still allows some trial and error, which is why current uses of digital media for campaigning is very important for scholarly inquiry.

As citizens and political elites try to define the rules of political contest (many of which are likely to be informal), these initial steps are important for how democratic elections would be institutionalized. It is possible to have transparent elections and a weak democracy if the process of candidate marketing involves too much campaign-sanctioned dissemination of rumors and smearing of the opposition, promoted by new digital media. In many countries in Africa, Southern Europe, and South America where democracy is usually still in transition (Cheeseman, 2010; Linz & Stepan, 1996), digital media may pose some unique challenges alongside the opportunities they afford in the development of democratic political culture. In Ekiti as in many rural districts in developing countries, for example, most people own feature phones that can only make calls and send/receive SMS (Pew Internet, 2015), the chances of voters accessing a fact-checking service that are now ubiquitous online is significantly diminished. That leaves an undesirable possibility that the type of practices citizens come to accept as normal, the limits of

decency in political conduct, and the general rules of the game may come to include practices that undermine democracy in the long run. These outcome of these processes will only become clearer in the years ahead.

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# Appendices

## Appendix I: Candidate Ayodele Fayose Joins Twitter



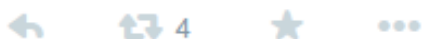
**Peter Ayodele Fayose** @GovAyoFayose · Mar 26

I call on all Ekiti indigenes home and abroad to join hands with me so that we can together march towards a more glorious future for Ekiti.



**Peter Ayodele Fayose** @GovAyoFayose · Mar 26

If we agree that this present debt-ridden govt in Ekiti must go, we must work together to achieve our goal.



**Peter Ayodele Fayose** @GovAyoFayose · Mar 26

My victory at the PDP primaries is a victory for all and I urge my fellow PDP members to close ranks and work with me towards victory.



**Peter Ayodele Fayose** @GovAyoFayose · Mar 26

Once has the Lord spoken, twice have I heard it, that all power belongs to God. It is in this spirit that I operate in politics and in life.

Search Twitter



**Peter Ayodele Fayose** @GovAyoFayose · Mar 25

It is a pleasure to connect with my friends on twitter.



## Appendix II: Fayose Alludes to Civil Servants Being Sacked



**Peter Ayodele Fayose** @GovAyoFayose · Apr 4

Thanks to my newest followers @koleojaomo, @idofoi @fayoseolamileka and @samlofty. Keep spreading the msg and let the engagement begin.

← ↻ 2 ★ …



**Peter Ayodele Fayose** @GovAyoFayose · Apr 3

'IF' it is true that the principal of Amoye Grammar School has been sacked, then @ekitistategov needs to give an explanation. cc @kfayemi

← ↻ 7 ★ …



**Peter Ayodele Fayose** @GovAyoFayose · Apr 3

Those who have the power to sack others will soon be sacked and they will return to Ghana.

← ↻ 9 ★ …




**Peter Ayodele Fayose** @GovAyoFayose · Apr 3


When the principal of a school can be sacked over the free movement of a citizen of the state, it is indeed a state of anarchy.

← ↻ 6 ★ …


### Appendix III: Fayose Begs His Party Leaders to Support Him

 **Peter Ayodele Fayose** @GovAyoFayose · Mar 28  
Nobody can win elections alone even if he is superman neither can anyone run government alone. I am willing to work with all stakeholders.

← ↻ 4 ★ 1 ⋮

 **Peter Ayodele Fayose** @GovAyoFayose · Mar 28  
I again urge all my co-contestants in PDP to work hand in hand with me as I am prepared to carry everybody along from campaign to governance

← ↻ 4 ★ 1 ⋮

 **Peter Ayodele Fayose** @GovAyoFayose · Mar 28  
Now that the NWC has spoken, it is my belief that all members of our great party must unite and flush out the failing govt in Ekiti state.

← ↻ 4 ★ 1 ⋮

### Appendix IV: Social Media Users React to the Election Results


-  **Oluwafemi ferrari** @ferrari9ja · 13m  
Fayose played the Masses game better than Fayemi #Ekitidecides  
Expand      ← Reply ↻ Retweet ★ Favorite ⋮ More
-  **Nicholas Oke Otu** @rhonicgroup · 13m  
Conceding already ?"@muchman16: It seems the thug cannot be stopped from taking over, he should repent and rule well.. #EkitiDecides"  
📍 Nigeria  
Expand      ← Reply ↻ Retweet ★ Favorite ⋮ More

 **Viralsplash.net** @Mayoviral · 15m  
APC needs to work hard in 2015 ooo. These results proves they've been more active on social media than on streets. [#EkitiDecides](#)


Expand Reply Retweet Favorite More

 **Gossip Nation** @OAU\_gossipz · 1h  
I'm from Ekiti. Fayemi is an elite Gov, Fayose is a masses Gov. The elites don't vote, the masses vote - [@OluFamous](#) [#EkitiDecides](#)

Expand Reply Retweet Favorite More

 **Imisi Osasona** @bRinEstAkeS · 5m  
Wisdom RT "[@Malaolu](#): Social media political activism does not garner election votes. The streets hold the aces.. [#EkitiDecides...](#)"

Reply Retweet Favorite More

 **Salim Gidado** @Serlymo · 6m  
Feeling a deep sense of demoralisation already for Nigeria. The outcome of [#Ekitidecides](#) puts a big dent on the masses' readiness for change

Expand Reply Retweet Favorite More

### Appendix V: Accusations and Counter-accusations of Vote Buying



Omotola. j .Ekeinde @Realomosexy · 15h

Isn't sharing of things during Elections by political parties Bribery and corruption/manipulation?why is this not a crime under the Law?

85 10



J#BringBackOurGirls @omojuwa · 1h

APC member caught distributing money for votes. They should ensure he goes to jail! [dailytrust.com.ng/top-stories/27...](http://dailytrust.com.ng/top-stories/27...) #EkitiDecides

Expand Reply Retweet Favorite More



**Stanley Azuakola** @stanleyazuakola · 26m

I can't wait to start analysing these Ekiti figures. I've never seen a day like this in my 15 years of actively following politics in Nigeria

Details

Reply Retweet Favorite More



**S.**  
@saratu

Follow

@stanleyazuakola I don't understand. Why're you so surprised? Have Nigerians ever voted against their pockets before?

Reply Retweet Favorite More

RETWEET

1



10:43 AM - 21 Jun 2014



**Stanley Azuakola** @stanleyazuakola · 18m

@saratu But towards the end Fayemi too began to share stuff

Details

Reply Retweet Favorite More



**S.** @saratu · 14m

@stanleyazuakola too little too late. And you can't fight a money fight with someone who has the president's nod.

Details

Reply Retweet Favorite More



**S.** @saratu · 13m

@stanleyazuakola remember: Fayose's ground game of money and outreach has been ongoing for a LONG while. No be today.

Details

Reply Retweet Favorite More



**That farmer boy** @Executive\_farm · 9m

@saratu @stanleyazuakola the same way he assisted fayemi to defeat oni during the last election

Details

Reply Retweet Favorite More

## Appendix VI: Governor Fayemi's Superior Social Media Strategy

June 11 at 3:25am

 **Reelectfayemi**  
June 4 • Edited

Download the reelectfayemi mobile app and get instant access to all facets of the JKF campaign. Be the first of your friends to download this app. Search using "reelectfayemi" on windows and andriod app stores.

**Download our campaign mobile app**

<http://bit.ly/1IZLrV7>   <http://bit.ly/U2fPrN> 

Available on Android & Windows platforms

facebook.com/reelectfayemi

 HOME PROMISES FULFILLED MANIFESTO  GET INVOLVED DONATE 

### Get Involved...Join the John Kayode Fayemi Campaign

Vote the Tested and Trusted Performer for 2nd term.

Your Full Name

Your Phone Number  Your Email


Your Town

Select LGA

Comment



MOBA, ILEMBE, OYE, IKOLE, EKITI EAST, IREPODUN IREPODUN, GRONYIN, EKITI WEST, EFON, ADD-EKITI, IKERE, ISOKUN, EMURE, EKITI SOUTH WEST

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