



Online Discourse on President Muhammadu Buhari's 'Change' Agenda

Nkiru Comfort Ezeh¹ and Emmanuel C. Odishika²

¹Department Of Mass Communication, Madonna University, Okija, Anambra State, Nigeria.

²Department Of Mass Communication, Novena University, Ogume, Delta State, Nigeria.

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ABSTRACT

'Change' is the campaign strategy Alhaji Mohammadu Buhari used in emerging the winner in the March, 28, 2015 Presidential election in Nigeria. Recently, Nigerians took to the online media to discuss the nature of the 'change' the president promised during his election campaign. This article explored the online discourse on the 'Change' agenda based on the context of Public Sphere Theory. The study used survey with a questionnaire as the instrument for data collection to sample 300 academic staff in the South-East geo-political zone in Nigeria to determine if their use of online media induced their participation in the discourse on 'Change' agenda and the credibility of the discourse. The study found that exposure to online media discourse is associated with political participation. online media platforms did not only provided avenues for political interaction but also effective in persuading participation in the discussion of matters of public interest like the 'Change' Agenda of the government. The study, therefore, recommends that citizens should utilize the opportunity presented by the online media platforms to present public service agenda which can attract attention to the essence of participating in governance and holding people in the position of authority accountable.

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Introduction

The role of media in sustaining democracy is no longer in doubt. Part of the requisites of democracy is; participation of citizens in the day-to-day governance of the society, and accountability to the citizens of those who exercise power on their behalf (Sawant, 2000). The common man, however well placed, was unable to exercise this right. He had neither the means nor the time to do that. It was only the conventional media of radio, television, and newspaper which was in the past the only channels of political communication that virtually exercised this right of the people on their behalf and bring about debate and discussion which is absolutely necessary for democracy. However, some scholars (Bakker & Vreesa, 2011; Boone & Gallant, 2007), believe that they directly or indirectly blocked popular participation and lack the ability of citizens to inject their views, voices, and values into governance (McQuail, 2005).

The emergence of online media such as the Facebook, Twitter, Blogs, Whatsapp and other social networks has transformed the interaction and communication of individuals throughout the world and has impacted many aspects of human communication, including politics. Scholars argued that the Internet is a democratising medium with the capacity to provide access to information and interaction, bringing individuals into the political process (Delli Carpini, 2000; Morris, 1999). Moreover, the open and participatory nature is compatible with fundamental democratic values (Kuslin, 2000). It encourages political discourses and builds online and offline support that will help drive interesting debates about any politician, political party and political agenda.

It has given the people the power to follow up on their mandate and withdraw their legitimacy if need be (Ezeh, Asadu & Edegoh, 2016).

Online media strengthens the democratic process, by creating a new electronic public sphere that allows citizens to directly connect with each other. The large and growing volume of political information on the Internet, coupled with its convenient access, is thought to create an informed citizenry who participate more in political life and who have a greater influence on the political process (Bimber, 1998; Johnson & Kaye, 2000, Levin, 2002).

Though some scholars (Adeyahu & Harana, 2011; Olabamiji, 2014) saw problems in the utilisation of online media technologies for political communication in Nigeria as their uses are sometimes dysfunctional. They are used to malign, intimidate and discredit political opponents thus triggering conflicts and tension through raising unnecessary alarm. In spite of the perceived danger in the use of online media in political participation, their importance cannot be underestimated especially in making the political office holders fulfill their campaign promises and accountable to the people that elected them.

It has been observed that during election campaigns, strong pressure drives the political parties and their candidates to make a lot of promises to the public in a bid to occupy a particular political position. The worst was that no one holds them challenged for their actions and inactions. This has been a major threat to democracy in many parts of the world and in Nigeria in particular as people do not enjoy the dividend of democracy.

In Nigeria, after 16 years of rule by People Democratic Party, a party which many adjudged as being corrupt, its population urgently needed a fundamental political reform and more transparent and accountable government. During the 2015 presidential election campaign in Nigeria, All Progressive Party (APC) that was the major opposition party in Nigeria, with Muhammadu Buhari as its candidate promised "Change" to the citizens. Nigerians voted the party in with a hefty majority, bringing about the first such democratic power transfer in the country's history. In May, 29th, 2015, the APC was sworn in and took over the mantle of leadership at the federal level in Nigeria under the campaign strategy of 'Change Agenda'. Nigerians have since taken to the online media to discuss the nature of Change the ruling party promised the citizens.

This study analyzed the emerging role of online discourse on the 'change' agenda as to determine the extent online engagement serves as a new outlet for political participation so as to hold people in governance accountable in fulfilling their campaign promises. The benefits of discourse suppose that the quality of communication is credible so that individuals will be able to make more informed decisions when exposed to it. It is only through constructive deliberations that the issues of public concern are brought to the limelight, enabling individuals to have a better evaluation of such issues (Ezeh and Ono, 2016).

Statement of Problem

During election campaign, politicians and political parties normally present campaign strategies, party manifestoes and reasons why voters should vote for them. When they eventually get to power, some disown their campaign promises, on the basis of which the people voted for them, while most of this promises never fulfilled thereby forming a clog in the wheel of development.

How to communicate directly with people in the authority as to be able to stimulate participation in politics as a democracy is a problem to Nigerian. The citizens need authentic communication channels through which to access information that can provide them with comparative political information, necessary for encouraging participation in politics. It becomes necessary to understand if the online channels are effective in political information delivery to citizens, such as academic staff of universities in the South-East Nigeria. It is the effectiveness of the used medium of communication in providing political information that determines citizen's participation in governance of a country like Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

1. To determine the extent university lecturers utilized online media for political communication
2. To ascertain if their use of online media induced their participation in the discourse on Mohammadu Buhari's 'Change' agenda.
3. To examine if online media is credible in the discourse of Mohammadu Buhari's 'Change Agenda'

Research Questions

1. To what extent did university lecturers utilize online media for political communication?
2. To what extent did their use of online media induce their participation in the discourse on Mohammadu Buhari's 'Change' Agenda?
3. Is online media credible in the discourse of Mohammadu Buhari's 'Change Agenda'?

Literature Review

Media and Political Participation: Online Vs Conventional Media

The world today has witness several political engagements explode through extensive debates by the citizens in matters that concern them. With the emergence of the Internet as a tool for political engagement, it has been seen as providing opportunities for the users to discover common interests with a potentially huge network of like-minded peers, develop new skills, build alternative deliberative spaces (Livingstone, 2005). Previous studies on political participation revealed that a variety of Online users are positively related to different forms of political participation, whereas the relationship between most users of traditional media and participation are weak, albeit positive (Bakker & Vreesa, 2011; Meltzer, Mueller & Tisinger, 2004; Boone & Gallant, 2007).

Access to the space is free and freedoms of assembly, association and expression are guaranteed (McQuail, 2005), unlike the mass media that manipulate the people rather than help them form opinions in a rational way. This is because of the gatekeeping process which makes the media selective about the people and issues that pass through the gate. Jenkins and Thorburn (2004, p.2) as cited in (Ezeh, Asadu & Edegoh, 2016) added that

The current diversification of communication channels is politically important because it expands the range of voices that can be heard in a national debate, ensuring that no one voice can speak with unquestioned authority.... Networked computing operates according to principles fundamentally different from those of broadcast media: access, participation, reciprocity and many to many rather than one to many.

Livingstone (2006) explains that the passive audience research models of traditional mass media research centered on the one-way reception of media messages must be replaced by an active audience research perspective to study online two-way communication. Moreover, scholarship confirms that online audiences are active users and not passive viewers of media (Aibar, 2010; Boone, 2004; Boone & Gallant, 2007; Deuze, 2006; Harrison & Barthel, 2009; Livingstone, 2004).

Many people become eager to have access to the online media because a friend is hooked on it; it becomes a misnomer for him or her not to be online (Oyesomi, Ahmadu and Itsekor, 2014). As they surf the net, they join some social networks and consequently participate in political debates and other politically related activities. As they do so, they consciously or unconsciously participate in the political process. Similarly, (Tolbert and McNeal's, 2003), assert that having access to the Internet and leveraging that access to find political information increases the likelihood that an individual participates in democratic process.

Grossman (1998, p.160) supported this view when he wrote that:

Increasingly sophisticated interactive telecommunication devices make government instantly aware of and responsive to popular will. This democratic political transformation is being propelled largely by two developments - the two-hundred-year-long march toward political equality for all citizens and the explosive growth of new telecommunications media, the remarkable convergence of television, telephone.

Umar (2011) examines the extent to which the use of Facebook by the BBC radio (Hausa service) as an interplay between old and new media systems influence political

awareness among Nigerians; and the extent to which Facebook provides opportunity for people to send, receive and perceive messages relating to politics and politicking. He found that online media have contributed in creating awareness politically among the citizens of the country within and in Diaspora. The audiences of the programmes normally listen to the station at the broadcast hours but the introduction of the Facebook link allows listeners to access all the programmes of the station at any time they want via the internet. With a link to the Facebook, they can as well see comments by different people, make their own contribution and also listen to the programmes if they want.

Bloggers help in the democratizing process by sapping the conventional media of some of its previous, oracle-like control over the campaign narratives. Among the more well-known, generalist blogs are the single-interest or policy bloggers who are highly educated and well positioned in their careers that see blogs as a quick and efficient way to make a change. Bloggers reported engaging in six distinct activities on their blog: filtering information, providing expertise, forming networks, gaining attention, framing arguments, and using windows of opportunity (Stepp, 2009). Though there are many questions concerning the long-term viability of blogs and the depth of their content, their accomplishments are significant (McKenna, 2007).

Daramola and Hamilton (2011) evaluated the emergence of online media as it affects public consciousness in urban Nigeria; how it drives civic activism as well as inspires political discourse. Their study traced the use of online media technology with a focus on Facebook. The study shows links between how Nigeria's President Goodluck Jonathan won the 2011 election and how he beat his closest rivals (Buhari, Ribadu and Shekarau) in Facebook followership. Findings show that Facebook can be better used to influence and boost democratic consciousness and that stakeholders - the Nigerian electorate, civic activists, politicians, political parties and government - can exploit this Internet-based social network to improve the mass communication process as it impacts democracy.

Dare, (2011) explores and analyzes the social context for the emergence of citizen journalism in Nigeria, the immense followership and support this phenomenon enjoys among Nigerians at home and in the Diaspora through the examination of the country's foremost citizen journalism enterprise, SaharaReporters.com.; and the technological platform for its operations. He argued that the emergence of Sahara Reporters was fueled by the interactive and investigative vacuum found in the conventional media in Nigeria. Its style of journalism has invigorated, informed and empowered the Nigerian citizenry. It has spurred them into a new era of citizenship awareness, greater political participation and a greater demand for accountability and transparency from those that govern them. However, in spite of its inherent weaknesses, citizen journalism in all its various forms can be fused with the traditional media to create a synergy that will be of democratic value to a democratizing country like Nigeria.

Studies show that satisfaction with the public discussion is low, indicating that many citizens feel as if these public opportunities are essentially a waste of time, claiming that there is not enough listening and response to concerns (Pearce and Littlejohn, 1997; Harwood Group, 1991). Thus, lack of public participation could partially be attributed to individual frustration with ineffective public discussion structures and

processes that do not encourage dialogic communication and leave citizens with the impression (and possible reality) that they are not being heard.

There is a need for changes in communicative structures that would serve as a corrective for structural enablers of inequity, in hopes that chances for more holistic, fair, and deliberative decisions would be increased. Such changes should result in the emergence of media structure where the public will be encouraged to voice their concerns, positions, and opinions on political matters and have direct interaction with the people in politics.

Theoretical Framework

This study is rested on the Public Sphere theory

Public Sphere Theory

The concept of the public sphere draws upon a historical and sociological account of the rise of Liberal – capitalist institutions and the modern state in 17th and 18th century Europe (Assange, 2011). Habermas observed that the evolution of media from small-scale newspapers and magazines to large –scale industrial conglomerates owned by those with a diverse range of interests and significant power networks, meant more freedom of the media.

Habermas refers to the public sphere as a notional 'space' which provides more or less autonomous and open arena or forum for public debate. He states that public sphere is like an intermediary system of communication between formally organized and informal face to face deliberations in arenas at both the top and bottom of the political system (Habermas, 2006). To him, this type of deliberation is the hallmark of the liberal or participatory democracy. Public sphere as he explained further, is "rooted in networks for a wild flow of messages –news, reports, commentaries, talks, scenes and images, and shows and movies with an informative, polemical, educational or entertaining content" (p. 415). These contents do not come from one central source as in conventional media but from the multiplicity of sources all trying to influence the opinion of one another especially that of those in a position of authority.

Habermas (1962) proposed that social institutions such as the media have played a critical role in enabling citizens to gain knowledge to debate matters of public significance, and through such debates, a rational –critical discourse can emerge through which public participation bears upon the conduct of the state, thereby, better securing the relationship between promises of liberal democracy, its potential empowerment of citizens, and the practice of the public institutions.

Also supporting this position are the views of Puopolo (2001), Gimmler (2001) and Browning (2002) who see the Internet as the booster of the public sphere and deliberative democracy, and concluded that the Internet can actually strengthen deliberative democracy because the Internet supports an equal and unrestricted means of access to information which is fundamental to the practice of discourse in the deliberative democratic process.

MuGuigan, (2005) looked into the cultural public sphere with the aim to stress the value of public opinions formed among cultural consumers. Both qualitative and quantitative methods are used; including content analysis, social network analysis, and discourse analysis. The study found that a limited public sphere was found, which can provide a safe online space for participants to express voice freely, but at the same contains some potential challenges such as lack of rationality and speech responsibility.

However, Dahlberg (2001; 625-627) reveals a number of factors limiting the expansion of the public sphere online which include: limited reflexivity and lack of respectful listening and commitment to working with difference, the difficulty verifying identity claims and information put forward, and domination of discourse (both quantitative and qualitative) by certain individuals and groups. According to (Calhoun 1992), a genuine public sphere should have the following common features:

- The focus of the discussion in the public sphere is on issues of common concern to the Public.
- It is inclusive in principle and should be equally accessible to all who may be interested in those issues or may be influenced by those issues.
- The proceeding of this communicative action is based on rational and critical deliberation.
- The deliberation itself is subject to a normative standard of evaluation and should be solely judged on the validity and rationality of the communication, rather than on the identity of the speaker or the decision from an arbiter.

Method

Survey Research Method was adopted for obtaining relevant data. Nine universities were selected out of the 18 universities that exist in the Southeast geopolitical zone of Nigeria, from which 300 respondents were drawn from the total population of 12,123 academic staff. A sample size of 300 is considered apt, since according to Wimmer and Dominick (2000), a sample size of “50 = very poor; 100 = poor; 200 = fair; 300 = good; 500 = very good and 1,000 = excellent.” Further justification for the use of 300 respondents was based on Nwana’s (1981) argument that “if the population is a few hundreds, a 40% or more sample will do; if many hundreds, a 20% sample will do; if a few thousands, a 10% sample will do; and if several thousand a 5% or less will do”.

The multistage sampling procedure was used in this study. The first stage involved the selection of universities to be studied. The researchers made a list of the universities in each of the three types of a university (private, state and federal) in five states in South-east zone of Nigeria. Two universities were randomly selected from each type. Of the six selected universities, two were privately owned; two were state universities while the other two were federal universities.

The second stage of the sampling involved selection of faculties to be studied from the various institutions that had been chosen. Again the researchers made a list of faculties/colleges into which the selected universities were organized. Two faculties/colleges were selected from each of the chosen university using simple Random method. The third stage involved selection of two departments from each of the faculties/colleges that had been chosen using also simple Random method. It means that 12 departments were selected from 12 faculties selected from the six chosen universities in the South East geo-political zone.

The choice for academia arouses from the facts that research has proved that they are more likely to use the Internet and spend more time online than other cohorts. The main instrument used for data collection was a set of structured questionnaire. To achieve reliability of the instrument, a pilot study was conducted in the three universities where the instrument was used. The response provided an avenue for corrections and improvement on the

instrument. The data generated was analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).

Results

The results of the study were presented, analyzed and discussed below. Three hundred copies of the questionnaire were administered on the respondents. However, 272 copies of the questionnaire were valid for this study. The details of results are as follows;

RQ1: To what extent did university lecturers utilize online media for political communication?

Table 1. Extent of use of online media for communication * Sex of the Respondents Cross tabulation.

Extent of use of online media for communication		Sex of the Respondents		Total
		Male	Female	
To a great extent	Count	135	11	146
	% of Total	49.6%	4.0%	53.7%
To no extent	Count	15	24	39
	% of Total	5.5%	8.8%	14.3%
Not really	Count	0	49	49
	% of Total	0.0%	18.0%	18.0%
Not sure	Count	1	37	38
	% of Total	0.4%	13.6%	14.0%
Total	Count	151	121	272
	% of Total	55.5%	44.5%	100.0%

Table 1 shows that female respondents were a little under-sampled than males, although both sexes were given equal chance of participation in the study. Males represented 55.5 percent of the sample while females were 44.5 percent, an indication that no significant disparity existed between the genders used for the study.

The table also shows that more than half 53.7% of the respondents said that they used online media to a large extent in communication; 14.3% of the respondents said plainly that they did not use online media for communication. 18% said that they did not use online media in communication; while 14% of the respondents were not sure if they use them or not. However, among the (53.7%) respondents that use online media to a large extent for communication, the majority (55.5%) of them are males. This corroborates with previous studies that females are reluctant to neither seek nor participate in political activities. This suggests that the more people use online media, the more they are likely to seek information in their areas of interest.

The data in table 2 show that 26.1% of the respondents were in the age brackets of 30-45, 40.4% were in the age brackets of 41-60 while about one-third were in the age brackets of 61 and above. It therefore suggests that respondents between the age brackets of 46-60 constituted the highest population sampled.

On the other hand, the younger lecturers extensively use the online media than the older ones. The data suggest that the extent of use of online media depends on the age of respondents. Younger lecturers had the tendency to use the online media more than their older counterpart. This is because according to (Environics Research Group, 2003), the Internet is becoming a defining part of younger people’s culture and an integral part of their daily lives. And the younger the person, the greater the likelihood he or she has access to the net (Baran, 2009).

Table 2. Extent of use of online media for political participation * Age of the respondents Cross tabulation.

Extent of use of online media for political participation		Age of the respondents			Total
		30-45	46-60	61 and above	
To a great extent	Count	50	96	0	146
	% of Total	18.4%	35.3%	0.0%	53.7%
To no extent	Count	0	2	37	39
	% of Total	0.0%	0.7%	13.6%	14.3%
Not really	Count	0	0	49	49
	% of Total	0.0%	0.0%	18.0%	18.0%
Not sure	Count	21	12	5	38
	% of Total	7.7%	4.4%	1.8%	14.0%
Total	Count	71	110	91	272
	% of Total	26.1%	40.4%	33.5%	100.0%

Table 3. Online channels where the discourses on Buhari's Change Agenda took place.

Online channels	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Facebook	272	2.92	2.368
Twitter	272	3.14	1.438
Youtube	272	2.01	1.209
Blogs	272	3.43	1.312
Wassap	272	2.60	1.482
Valid N	272		

This study sought to find out the respondents' online channel for discourse on Buhari's 'Change' Agenda. Reading across the table 3, Blogs recorded 3.43>3.0 ranking highest among other channels, followed by Twitter which ranked second at 3.14>3.0. Others are insignificant at they scored below the decision point of 3.0. Among the insignificant channels are; Facebook and Whatsapp recording 2.92<3.0 and 2.60<3.00, bringing them to third position and fourth position respectively, Youtube ranked lowest (fifth) with 2.01<3.0.

Although previous research has proved that Facebook is more popular when compared with other online channels and accessed on a daily basis by half its members (Ezeh, 2015; David Steves, 2010; Eugene, 2010), Blogs and Twitter seem to be more useful in reading and participating in political discussions.

The use of twitter for political participation could also be for the fact that it is used for less social activities than facebook and by mostly matured minds and professionals who may be more knowledgeable on the issue at stake (Ezeh, 2015) like public policy.

to that are people who extensively use online media. Again, applying chi square to the table, since P-value is less than 0.05, we accept that there is a significant relationship between the extent of use of online media and respondent's participation in the discourse on change agenda.

This suggests that the extent of use of online media for political communication seems to increase with the extent of use of online media. This corroborates (Ezeh and Enwereuzo) suggestion that the more the respondents use Internet for online communication, the more they are likely to be exposed to any burning political issues in society which one or more persons may bring on-line. This is in line with (Levin, 2003; Darly, 2008) assertion that the flexibility of the network allows users to have access to relevant political information which ordinarily would not have been known and become involved in the political event which they may not have known.

RQ3: Is online media effective in discussing the issue of the day?

Table 5. Online media use in political Discourse on Buhari's Change Agenda.

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
For constructive deliberation on the 'Change Agenda	272	3.44	1.270
For debasing opponents and their ideologies	272	3.11	1.424
For encouraging tribalism	272	2.93	1.440
For attacking a religion or denomination	272	2.76	1.422
For advertising fake job and other unreliable business	272	2.08	1.155

The use of online media for political participation was sought for in order to know if it was effective in discussing the issue of the day. For "Constructive deliberation" had the highest mean score of 3.44 as the most significant use. The second significant use is "for praise singing" with the mean score of 3.11. The rest are insignificant at mean score < 3.0, as 3.0 is the decision point for this measurement. "slander" came third, scoring 2.76, for "Abuse of one another" and "for advertising goods and services" came fourth and fifth at 2.76 and 2.08 respectively.

This finding indicates that in as much as that there was constructive deliberation on 'Change' Agenda on online media, it was also used for praise singing.

Discussion of Findings

Female respondents were a little under-sampled than males, although both sexes were given equal chance of participation in the study. Respondents between the age brackets of 46-60 constituted the highest population sampled.

Table 4. Extent of use of online media for political communication * online media and the inducement for discourse on change agenda Cross tabulation.

Extent of use of online media for political participation		online media and inducement for discourse on change agenda					Total
		strongly agreed	Agreed	Undecided	Disagreed	Strongly Disagreed	
To a great extent	Expected Count	44.0	53.7	20.4	18.3	9.7	146.0
	% of Total	30.1%	23.5%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	53.7%
To no extent	Expected Count	11.8	14.3	5.4	4.9	2.6	39.0
	% of Total	0.0%	13.2%	1.1%	0.0%	0.0%	14.3%
Not really	Expected Count	14.8	18.0	6.8	6.1	3.2	49.0
	% of Total	0.0%	0.0%	12.9%	4.8%	0.4%	18.0%
Not sure	Expected Count	11.5	14.0	5.3	4.8	2.5	38.0
	% of Total	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	7.7%	6.3%	14.0%
Total	Expected Count	82.0	100.0	38.0	34.0	18.0	272.0
	% of Total	30.1%	36.8%	14.0%	12.5%	6.6%	100%

The study found that academic staff of Nigerian universities to large extent access online platforms through which political communication can be realized. It is understandable that access to online media electronically empowers the citizens to be actively involved in the democratic process (Ifukor, 2010). This implies that there is a dialectical relationship between online media discourse and the process of political empowerment as it directs the citizen to such sites where political discourses like the 'Change Agenda' are held.

Age is one of the most dramatics differentiators in online media use in Nigeria. Younger people are particularly well-positioned to take advantage of the opportunities offered by the Internet and digital technology—including entertainment, data gathering, production, and networking—which have been part of their political socialization (Jennings and Zeitner 2003). The study has shown that the higher the age, the lower the use of online media in political communication.

However, the respondents rely on information from blogs and twitter than other online media for political discourse like 'Change Agenda'. This could be because twitter seems to provide more quality information when compared to facebook because of its usage by mostly matured minds and professionals who may be more knowledgeable on the issue at stake (Ezeh, 2015); unlike facebook which can be used by anybody, irrespective of status. Bloggers also are highly educated and well positioned in their careers, and see their blogs as a quick and efficient way to make a change (Stepp, 2009). They have made significant impact as major newspapers and conventional broadcast media monitor their activities.

The online media platforms of blog and twitter, therefore, played a vital role in enabling citizens to gain knowledge to political issues of public significance. They were significantly effective in inducing people for participation in government since it induced them to participate in the discourse of major agenda in political administration; it has spurred them into a new era of citizenship awareness, and a greater demand for accountability and transparency from those that govern them. The import shows the relationship between the used online media and people's participation in governance. This is in line with the views of Public Sphere theory that; to create a genuinely participatory democracy, the media must be committed to linking senders to receivers and also favour and encourage horizontal patterns of interaction. The citizens must be informed, they must be capable of argumentation and participation, and they must be active and organize to become a transformative democratic political force.

The study further sought to find out the quality of discourse on online media understanding the fact that it is only through constructive deliberations that the issues of public concern are brought to the limelight, enabling individuals have a better evaluation of such issues (Ezeh and Ono, 2016). It was found that in as much as it was significant (3.44>3.0) in constructive deliberation on the 'Change' Agenda, it was also significant (3.11>3.0) in debasing opponents and their ideologies. They were also use, though insignificant (<3.0) in criticizing other people's religion and tribe. Instead of concentrating on the issue of discussion, some users attack personalities, tribe and religion. They were also used in advertising fake jobs and business opportunities. Fraudsters use the opportunity of heavy interaction in an online medium which content are of great public interest like

the 'Change' Agenda to dupe unsuspected users of their hard earned resources, injure or even kill them.

Conclusion

No doubt, online media have potentials to transform politics and democracy. It has given the people the power to follow up on their mandate and withdraw their legitimacy if need be. The case of Arab Spring is still fresh on our mind; through online media, repressive governments in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya among others were brought down. The online media platforms did not only provided avenues for political interaction but also effective in persuading participation in the discussion of matters of public interest like the 'Change Agenda' of the present government. The reason is that the platforms provided users access to information and facilitated the opportunity for them to freely express their opinion in a democratic setting.

Recommendations

1. Online media platforms should be used to present public service agenda which can attract attention to the essence of participating in governance. It is only when use is frequent, regular and consistent in the presentation of persuasive political information that participation can be assured
2. Persuasive communication which explains political issues of public concern can be effectively posted on online media platforms by political candidates. It means that where the nature of relayed message is well focused, then the chances of using the social media networks for inducing citizen's participation in governance can be enhanced.
3. Given the growing popularity and penetration of Internet and social media, and the way they are embraced by today's society, more explicative studies is advocated to be conducted on this relatively new platform.

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