

Strengthening Political Parties Series



USE OF COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES BY POLITICAL PARTIES IN NIGERIA

ELECTORAL HUB TECHNICAL PAPER 8/2021



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**INITIATIVE FOR RESEARCH,
INNOVATION AND ADVOCACY
IN DEVELOPMENT**

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ACRONYMS

A	Accord Party
AA	Action Alliance
AAC	African Action Congress
ADC	African Democratic Congress
ADP	Action Democratic Party
APC	All Progressives Congress
APGA	All Progressives Grand Alliance
APM	Allied People's Movement
APP	Action People's Party
BP	Boot Party
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
EMB	Electoral Management Body
FBOs	Faith Based Organizations
INEC	Independent National Electoral Commission
LP	Labour Party
MDAs	Ministries, Departments and Agencies
NNPP	New Nigeria People's Party
NRM	National Rescue Movement
PDP	People's Democratic Party
PRP	People's Redemption Party
SDP	Social Democratic Party
SIECs	State Independent Electoral Commissions
YPP	Young Progressive Party
ZLP	Zenith Labour Party

INTRODUCTION

The internet has revolutionized politics globally in the last quarter of a century. The advent of the information superhighway invigorated a certain hope for the democratization of the world with expectations that it will give everyone a voice and level the playing field in politics, business and society. The realization of this hope and its ensuing expectations has been varied from society to society depending on factors within and without these societies. The Nigerian society and polity has not been insulated from the impact of the internet which has swept the globe. Since Nigeria's return to democracy in 1999, the internet has played an increasingly vital role in its politics.

Elected officials, government ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs), politicians and political figures, political parties, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), Faith Based Organizations (FBOs), political activists, and stakeholders within the Nigerian polity use the internet to interact with each other and the citizenry as a channel to inform and to influence political thought, discourse and action. This process can be referred to as political communication.

As Perloff has recognized, “political communication is an important ingredient in a functioning democracy”. Of particular importance is the deliberative theory of democracy, which proposes that public policy should be the result of thoughtful deliberation and dialogue by the people. In our modern world, the importance of technology as a tool to promote this kind of public discourse cannot be overemphasized. Some of the technological platforms that are particularly suitable for this are websites, online public forums, blogs, and microblogging platforms like Twitter.

Römmele has pointed out that “in modern mass democracies it is political parties that connect government and the governed with one another”. This illustrates the important role that parties play in promoting public dialogue on political issues. For example, it has been noted that parties across the world such as the Green Party in the UK and the Reform Party in the USA have opted for interactive uses of technology to promote participation of their members. Against this context, it is important to consider how political parties in Nigeria also utilize technological platforms as tools for modern interaction, to promote political engagement with the general public.

¹Goyal, M. (2020, August 16). *The India story after 25 years of internet and how it has transformed our lives*. Retrieved December 5, 2020, from *The Economic Times*: <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/tech/internet/the-india-story-after-25-years-of-internet-and-how-it-has-transformed-our-lives/articleshow/77565596.cms>

²Perloff, R. M. (2014). *The Dynamics of Political Communication: Media and Politics in a Digital Age*, page 16. Routledge: New York

This paper is the first in a series of technical papers aimed at strengthening political parties as institutions of democracy and political organisations in Nigeria. The paper seeks to examine how effectively political parties use communication technologies, particularly their websites and select social media that are popular in Nigeria, to inform as well as influence the polity. It also seeks to examine how parties' websites and popular social media pages can be used as tools for strengthening political parties within the Nigerian political system. It ends with observations and recommendations that are aimed at improving parties' use of these public communication platforms.

³*Ibid*, page 14

⁴Römmele, A. (2003). *Political Parties, Party Communication and New Information and Communication Technologies*. *Party Politics*, 9(1), 7–20. Retrieved March 15, 2021, from <https://doi.org/10.1177/135406880391002>

⁵*Ibid*

CURRENT POLITICAL PARTIES IN NIGERIA

Nigeria operates a multi-party democratic system. There are currently 18 registered political parties in Nigeria on whose platform candidates can vie for elective positions within the government. The Electoral Management Body (EMB) with the constitutional authority to register, monitor and regulate political party operations as well monitor party finance and campaigns is the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). There are also State Independent Electoral Commissions (SIECs) in the 36 states of the country which conduct local council elections.



Any person seeking elective office in Nigeria must run on the platform of a political party after going through a party primary election as independent candidature is not prescribed by law in Nigeria. As such, political parties are indispensable to the political process in Nigeria.

⁶INEC. (n.d.). *Political Parties*. Retrieved December 6, 2020, from www.inecnigeria.org: <https://www.inecnigeria.org/political-parties/>






⁷Akinduro, O. (n.d.). *Nigeria: Independent National Electoral Commission*. Retrieved December 6, 2020, from [www.aceproject.org](http://aceproject.org): http://aceproject.org/ace-en/topics/em/electoral-management-case-studies/nigeria-a-need-for-modernization/mobile_browsing/onePag

⁸Abba, S. A., & Babalola, D. (2017). *Contending Issues in Political Parties in Nigeria: The Candidate Selection Process*. *Africology: The Journal of Pan African Studies*, 11(1), 123-134. Retrieved December 6, 2020, from www.core.ac.uk: <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/322493583.pdf>

Political parties do not exist in a vacuum. They function in, and in many cases adapt to, the societies in which they find themselves. The Nigerian society has rapidly been moving towards digitalization in the last two decades. Nigeria is ranked the 7th country in the world with the highest number of internet users with more than 100 million Nigerians connected to the internet. In a country where more than 55% of its population are connected to the internet, it is imperative that all stakeholders in the political process, including political parties, take advantage of opportunities the internet affords for strengthening not only their institutional goals but also the process of democratization in the country.

Ahead of the 2019 general elections, there were as many as 91 registered political parties in Nigeria. However, following the elections, INEC undertook a mass deregistration exercise, in line with Section 225A of the 1999 Constitution of Nigeria which empowers the body to deregister a party for failure to win a certain percentage of votes and seats during elections. Consequently, there are now only 18 parties recognized by INEC. Below is a list of the 18 registered political parties in Nigeria:

POLITICAL PARTIES IN NIGERIA SINCE FEBRUARY 2020

S/N	POLITICAL PARTY LOGO	PARTY ACRONYM	FULL NAMES
1		A	ACCORD
2		AA	ACTION ALLIANCE
3		AAC	AFRICAN ACTION CONGRESS
4		ADC	AFRICAN DEMOCRATIC CONGRESS
5		ADP	ACTION DEMOCRATIC PARTY
6		APC	ALL PROGRESSIVES CONGRESS

⁹Adesoji, B. S. (2019, July 16). Nigeria ranks 7th country with highest number of internet users in the world.. Retrieved December 6, 2020, from [www.nairametrics.com: https://nairametrics.com/2019/07/16/nigeria-ranks-7th-country-with-highest-number-of-internet-users-in-the-world/](https://nairametrics.com/2019/07/16/nigeria-ranks-7th-country-with-highest-number-of-internet-users-in-the-world/)

¹⁰Russo, M. (2020, February 20). How internet access is improving in Nigeria. Retrieved December 6, 2020, from [www.bbc.com: https://www.bbc.com/news/business-51377955](https://www.bbc.com/news/business-51377955)

¹¹Adesoji, B.S. (2019, July 16), *op. cit.*

S/N	POLITICAL PARTY LOGO	PARTY ACRONYM	FULL NAMES
7		APGA	ALL PROGRESSIVES GRAND ALLIANCE
8		APM	ALLIED PEOPLES' MOVEMENT
9		APP	ACTION PEOPLES PARTY
10		BP	BOOT PARTY
11		LP	LABOUR PARTY
12		NNPP	NEW NIGERIA PEOPLES PARTY
13		NRM	NATIONAL RESCUE MOVEMENT
14		PDP	PEOPLES DEMOCRATIC PARTY
15		PRP	PEOPLES REDEMPTION PARTY
16		SDP	SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY
17		YPP	YOUNG PROGRESSIVE PARTY
18		ZLP	ZENITH LABOUR PARTY

Source: INEC 2021

Despite the presence of these parties, politics and elections in Nigeria tend to be dominated by two main parties – the All Progressives Congress (APC) and the People's Democratic Party (PDP) – at national, state, and local levels. Since 1999, all Presidents of the nation have been either PDP or APC members. All but one of the 36 states in Nigeria have either APC or PDP members as Governors (the only exception is Anambra State with an APGA member as Governor). All Chairmanship and Councillorship positions in the local government elections held in 2020 were won by either APC or PDP members. These examples illustrate the stronghold that these two parties have on the electoral process in Nigeria. As discussed later in this paper, this two-party system is also reflected in the public platforms of these parties.

Another feature of the party system in Nigeria is weak institutionalization. This can be traced to the numerous military coups that hampered the development of democracy in Nigeria from 1966 to 1999. This has meant that Nigeria has had barely over 20 years of uninterrupted experience with democracy. The Justice Uwais-led Electoral Reform Committee of 2008 cited weak democratic institutions as a weakness of Nigeria's electoral system. Over a decade later, this finding is still true. Angerbrandt, writing after the 2019 elections, “shows parties in Nigeria to have weak roots in society and fragile party organizations, which contribute to a volatile electoral context marred by violence and irregularities”.

This weak institutionalization is notable in a number of ways, including internal strife within parties, lack of internal democracy within parties, undue influence of certain individuals (godfathers) within parties, lack of distinct ideologies to separate parties, personality-based rather than issue-based campaigning, and frequent defections from one party to another. All of these deficiencies in the Nigerian party system act as barriers for parties to communicate with citizens, as there are no strong ideological foundations on which to engage them. Later in this paper, we recommend that parties align themselves to strong ideologies that can guide their engagement with voters.

¹²For an analysis of the 2020 local government elections in Nigeria, see Electoral Hub (2021), *Deepening Democracy: A Reflection on the 2020 Local Government Elections in Nigeria*,

Electoral Hub Technical Paper 6/2021. Retrieved March 15, 2021, from <https://electoralhub.iriadev.org/electoral-hub-technical-paper-on-deepening-democracy-a-reflection-on-the-2020-local-government-elections-in-nigeria/>

¹³Report of the Electoral Reform Committee, Vol 1, Dec 2008, pages 3-6. Retrieved March 15, 2021, from <https://nairametrics.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/Uwais-Report-on-Electoral-Reform.pdf>

¹⁴Angerbrandt, H (2020) “Party system institutionalization and the 2019 state elections in Nigeria”, *Regional & Federal Studies*, 30:3, 415-44, page 416. Retrieved March 15, 2021, from <https://doi.org/10.1080/13597566.2020.1758073>

USE OF COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES

Communication technologies broadly refer to the platforms through which information is transmitted from one point to the other. Technological developments have made the transmission of information much cheaper, faster, and easier. This has also meant that there is an oversupply of information available to citizens, with increased choice as well as increased access to virtually any information they seek. In this section, we consider how the 18 registered political parties in Nigeria use two main communication technologies – websites and social media platforms (Facebook and Twitter) – to communicate with voters

Websites of Political Parties in Nigeria

S/N	PARTY	ACR	WEBSITE
1	Action Alliance	AA	N/A
2	African Action Congress	AAC	www.aacparty.org
3	African Democratic Congress	ADC	www.adcparty.org.ng
4	Action Democratic Party	ADP	www.adp.ng
5	Accord Party	A	N/A
6	All Progressives Congress	APC	www.apc.com.ng
7	All Progressives Grand Alliance	APGA	www.apgaofficial.org
8	Allied Peoples Movement	APM	N/A
9	Action Peoples Party	APP	www.actionpeoplesparty.com
10	Boot Party	BP	www.boot.org.ng
11	Labour Party	LP	www.labourparty.ng
12	New Nigeria Peoples Party	NNPP	www.nnpp.org.ng
13	National Rescue Movement	NRM	www.nrm.org.ng
14	Peoples Democratic Party	PDP	www.peoplesdemocraticparty.com.ng
15	Peoples Redemption Party	PRP	www.prp.com.ng
16	Social Democratic Party	SDP	www.sdp.com.ng
17	Young Progressives Party	YPP	www.ypp.ng
18	Zenith Labour Party	ZLP	N/A

Accord Party (A)

After a search of the internet no official website was found for A.

Action Alliance (AA)

After a search of the internet no official website was found for AA.

Action Democratic Party (ADP)

The ADP website www.adp.ng is functional and accessible. It contains the basics for a political party website in Nigeria including the following pages: about us, constitution, structure, membership registration, candidates, and contact information.

ADP also uses the Medium platform to publish posts about the party, which is linked on their website. However, the last post was made on Jan 14, 2019 which shows that there has been over two years of inactivity. As a result, the website is not actively used on a daily basis to engage members, the electorate and the general public.

Action Peoples Party (APP)

The APP website www.actionpeoplesparty.com is inaccessible. When trying to access it a message appeared: “This domain name has expired. If you are the registrant of this domain name, please contact your registration service provider to renew it.”

African Action Congress (AAC)

The AAC website www.aacparty.org is fully functional and accessible. The website gives a clear description of the party's philosophy and has the party's manifesto on it. The website is user friendly as it is easy to use and navigate.

The most recent post on the website is two months old. There are also posts regarding the off-cycle gubernatorial elections that took place in Ondo and Edo states earlier in 2020 even though AAC boycotted the elections in Edo state. A lot of the content seemed to be geared towards political activism.

The website had pages for donations to the party, volunteering and joining the party. It also had a page for events.

African Democratic Congress (ADC)

The ADC website www.adcparty.org.ng is fully functional and accessible. The website gives a clear description of the party's philosophy and has the party's manifesto on it. The website is user friendly as it is easy to use and navigate.

The most recent posts from the party can be accessed via a link to the party's news blog: www.adcnignews.blogspot.com. This blog seems to be the means of keeping its membership and

the public abreast with recent events especially those of interest to the party. The party blog is active and blogging seems to be a daily activity. This seems to be a very innovative means of informing and influencing the electorate and the general public both during and out of the electoral season.

The website has pages for payment of dues, donations to the party, volunteering and joining the party. The website and news blog have links to the party's social media handles and pages on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube and Google+.

All Progressives Congress (APC)

The APC website www.apc.com.ng is fully functional and accessible. The website gives a clear information about the party, its philosophy and its manifesto. The website is user friendly as it is easy to use and navigate.

The website has sections for press releases; election results; media; the party's candidates for federal and state elections; live streaming; events; photo gallery; and about the party.

The website is up to date and is being actively used by the ruling party to engage its members, the electorate and the general public.

All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA)

The APGA website www.apgaofficial.org is fully functional and accessible. The website has the following sections; home, about us, the leadership, resources (the party constitution and manifesto), news, gallery and members' area. Most of these sections have not been recently updated.

The most recent post on the website was 22 months ago showing the party is not using the website as primary means of engagement. As an opposition with considerable following in the south-eastern region of the country and 9 seats in the Federal House of Representatives, the website does not show significant activity by the party in terms of engaging its members, the electorate and the public through the use of the internet.

Allied Peoples Movement (APM)

After a search of the internet no website was found for APM.

Boot Party (BP)

The BP website www.bp.org.ng is fully functional and accessible with numerous links to pages that contain information about the philosophy, agenda, operations and other relevant details pertaining to the party. The website has links to the official social media pages and handles of the party.

The website has significant information uploaded and online resources to engage its membership, the electorate and the public. The website also has pages for donating, volunteering and joining the party.

The website has a very robust content for local and diaspora members, however it does not appear to be the primary forum for interaction between the leadership and members; between the members; and between the party and the public.

Labour Party (LP)

The LP website www.lp.ng/ is inaccessible because the server cannot be found.

New Nigeria Peoples Party (NNPP)

The NNPP website www.nnpp.org.ng is functional and accessible. It contains the basics for a political party website in Nigeria including the following pages: about NNPP, party manifesto, party leaders, membership registration, donations, gallery, payments for party cards.

The last post on the website was a month ago showing that the website is not actively used on a daily basis to engage members, the electorate and the general public.

National Rescue Movement (NRM)

The NRM website www.nrm.org.ng is functional and accessible. It is user-friendly and has content about the aims, objectives and principles of the party. It also contains information about the leadership of the party, the manifesto and constitution of the party, as well as a news section, a media section and a section for membership enrollment.

The website has very little content on issues within the polity. There is no recent commentary on social or political issues neither is there any ongoing discourse or engagement with viewers on these issues.

There are no recent posts on the website which gives a sense that the website just gives information about the party primarily and is a platform for those interested in joining the party to register. It does very little in form of political engagement.

Peoples Democratic Party (PDP)

The PDP website www.peoplesdemocraticparty.com.ng is fully functional and accessible. It contains relevant information pertaining to the party: its history and background, structure,

¹⁵*Election Guide: Democracy Assistance and Election News. (n.d.). Federal Republic of Nigeria. Retrieved December 7, 2020, from www.electionguide.org: <https://www.electionguide.org/elections/id/3101/>*

leadership and stakeholders. It also contains relevant documents like the party's resolutions, manifesto, constitution and code of conduct. There are also sections on admission into membership, media and elections.

The website has publications and statements of the party's position on national and political issues showing that it is used to some extent as a medium of informing and influencing political thought. It also has up to date information on news and current affairs as well as the party's events.

The website seems to be a functional tool for reaching its members, the electorate and the general public with informative and persuasive content. At the time of writing, their last post on the website was made on March 1, 2021, which is just about three weeks ago.

Peoples Redemption Party (PRP)

The PRP website www.prp.com.ng is fully functional and accessible. The website is user-friendly and easy to navigate. It gives detailed information pertaining to the party's history and legacy as well as the principles and philosophy upon which the party was founded. It also contains relevant documents like the party's constitution and a document on the programmes and principles of the party.

There is also a section for membership registration, as well as a section for news containing press statements and the party's position on issues. However, the section on news and the party's position on issues is scanty and there are no recent posts. The most recent post was uploaded more than two years ago showing that the website is not an effective medium for informing or engaging the party's membership, the electorate and the general public.

Social Democratic Party (SDP)

The SDP website www.sdp.com.ng is inaccessible. When trying to access it a following message appeared: "This Account has been suspended. Contact your hosting provider for more information."

Young Progressive Party (YPP)

The YPP website www.ypp.ng is accessible and functional as well as user friendly and easy to navigate. The website gives information pertaining to the party's vision and its leadership, as well as statistics on its membership, support base and projects.

The website also has a news center with relevant information pertaining to the party and a pictorial gallery. There is also a section for membership registration and to shop party merchandise.

The website also has a distinct feature which is a page with the telephone numbers of all state chapter and diaspora chairmen of the party. There is live feed from the party's official Twitter handle which is up to date with recent tweets on national and political issues and serves as a medium for informing, persuading and engaging the membership, electorate and the general public.

Zenith Labour Party (ZLP)

After a search of the internet no official website was found for ZLP.

Social Media (Facebook and Twitter) Pages of Political Parties

S/N	PARTY	ACR	FACEBOOK	TWITTER
1	Action Alliance	AA	www.facebook.com/newactionalliance/	N/A
2	African Action Congress	AAC	www.facebook.com/AacNational/	@aacparty
3	African Democratic Congress	ADC	www.facebook.com/ADCNig/	@TheOfficialADC
4	Action Democratic Party	ADP	www.facebook.com/ADPNigeria/	@ADPng
5	Accord Party	A	www.facebook.com/accord-party-293305797446757/	@AccordPartyNG
6	All Progressives Congress	APC	www.facebook.com/APCGovernment/	@OfficialAPCNg
7	All Progressives Grand Alliance	APGA	www.facebook.com/APGA-294833273924778/	N/A
8	Allied Peoples Movement	APM	www.facebook.com/Allied-Peoples-Movement-102133358193009/	N/A
9	Action Peoples Party	APP	www.facebook.com/actionpeoplesparty/	N/A
10	Boot Party	BP	www.facebook.com/TheBOOTParty/	@TheBOOTParty
11	Labour Party	LP	www.facebook.com/OfficialLabourPartyNG/	N/A
12	New Nigeria Peoples Party	NNPP	www.facebook.com/OfficialNNPP/	N/A
13	National Rescue Movement	NRM	https://web.facebook.com/NationalRescueMovementNRM/	@movement_rescue
14	Peoples Democratic Party	PDP	www.facebook.com/officialpdpnig/	@OfficialPDPNig
15	Peoples Redemption Party	PRP	multiple pages, unable to verify official FB page	N/A
16	Social Democratic Party	SDP	www.facebook.com/SDPNig/	@officialsdpng
17	Young Progressive Party	YPP	www.facebook.com/yppnational/	@YPPNational

Accord Party (A)

The A Facebook page was created on November 2, 2012. The page is followed by 2,747 Facebook users. The last post on the page was on April 9, 2013 which shows inactivity for more than 7 years. Moreover, there are only seven posts in total on the page, which shows that the medium is not used frequently to update and engage members.

The A Twitter handle @AccordPartyNG was created in June 2016 and has 283 followers. The most recent tweet was on November 25, 2016. This shows it was active for only five months with 407 tweets. With very few followers and inactivity for years, it is clear that A is not taking advantage of this medium.

Action Alliance (AA)

The AA Facebook page was created on June 27, 2020, which shows that the party started using this medium only recently. It has a relatively small following of just 513 users, which makes it the party with the least followers on Facebook. The last post on the page was November 15, 2020 which shows it has not been very active in the last three months. Moreover, there are only eight posts in total on the page, which shows that the medium is not used frequently to update and engage members.

A Twitter handle for AA could not be found.

Action Democratic Party (ADP)

The ADP Facebook page was created on December 9, 2016. It has garnered 8,944 followers in 4 years which is not a significant followership, compared to other larger parties. Even though there are recent posts, the reach and impact of the page is questionable due to its low followership as well as low engagement with its posts.

The ADP Twitter handle @ADPng was created in December 2016 and has 980 followers and 1,079 tweets. There has been recent activity on the handle but it still has very few followers and poor engagement, which raises doubts about the reach and effectiveness of the tweets.

Action Peoples Party (APP)

The APP Facebook page was created on November 27, 2017. It has 2,343 followers and has not had any posts since June 2018. The inactivity for more than two years shows that the party has not effectively utilized this medium for political engagement. Even while it was active, there was poor engagement with its posts.

A Twitter handle for APP could not be found.

African Action Congress (AAC)

The AAC Facebook page was created on April 16, 2018 and has 9,095 followers. The page is up to date with posts on party related matters, and national political issues. However, the engagement is poor, with only a handful of likes and barely any comments. Both followership and engagement need to be boosted to increase the reach and impact of the page.

The AAC Twitter handle @aacparty was created in August 2018 and has 5,253 followers. The handle is up to date with 1,861 tweets on relevant political and national issues, press releases from the party, reports from events and announcements of party events. This medium is being used actively by the party, with a fair amount of engagement (particularly retweets and likes). However, it can be optimized by increasing its followers and engagement even further.

African Democratic Congress (ADC)

The ADC Facebook was created on August 23, 2019 and has 3,696 followers. There are posts on national and political issues which are both recent and relevant. However, the engagement is poor, and the followership is not large enough for effective reach and impact.

The ADC Twitter handle @TheOfficialADC was created in November 2018 and has 2,108 followers. There are only 2 tweets on the handle, both of which are retweets of other people's content, rather than original posts. This clearly shows inactivity and lack of engagement with followers.

All Progressives Congress (APC)

The APC Facebook page was created on February 7, 2013 and has 128,739 followers, which is the second highest among all the parties. The page is very active with posts on current national and political issues. It also has a fairly significant followership which makes it a potentially effective medium of political engagement for the ruling party. Although the level of engagement is higher than that of most other parties in Nigeria, it is still not impressive given the high level of followership the party has. For more impact, the party should strive to boost engagement of its followers.

The APC Twitter handle @OfficialAPCNg was created in April 2018 and has approximately 440,900 followers, which is also the second highest among all the parties. It is actively used by the ruling party and has 3,199 tweets targeted at party members, the electorate, political opposition and the general public. The engagement on the party's tweets is also relatively high, although again compared to the number of followers, it is not particularly impressive. A higher level of engagement would boost impact further.

All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA)

The APGA Facebook page was created on April 19, 2012 and has 84,556 followers. Despite its fairly significant following, the page seems to be administered by a faction of the party and most of the recent posts on it reveal internal disputes within the party. It is not an effective medium for political engagement, neither does it portray the party in a good light.

A Twitter handle for APGA could not be found.

Allied Peoples Movement (APM)

The APM Facebook page was created on May 27, 2020, which shows that the party started using this medium only recently. It has 918 followers, and only 5 posts since it was created, with the last post being as far back as July 2020. This shows that the page lacks content and an effective reach.

A Twitter handle for APM could not be found.

Boot Party (BP)

The BP Facebook page was created on January 8, 2018 and has 521 followers. The page has fairly recent posts with the last post being about a month ago. It has however not garnered a large enough following to be impactful.

The BP Twitter handle @TheBOOTParty, is up to date with 441 tweets. It was created in March 2018 and has only 65 followers and poor engagement with its posts. Despite being active the followers are just too few to have an effective reach.

Labour Party (LP)

The LP Facebook was created on January 2, 2018 and has 796 followers. The last post on the page was on March 26, 2018. It was active for nearly 3 months but has been dormant for more than two years now. The page has not been used effectively by the party.

A Twitter handle for LP could not be found.

New Nigeria Peoples Party (NNPP)

The NNPP Facebook page was created on June 29, 2020 and has 580 followers. The page has been active with posts since its creation, but needs more followers to enable impactful engagement.

A Twitter handle for NNPP could not be found.

National Rescue Movement (NRM)

The NRM Facebook page was created on January 31, 2021, which is very recent. So far, it has garnered 1,535 followers, which is impressive considering the short period of time. However, the level of engagement with posts is poor and needs to be improved.

The NRM handle @movement_rescue was created in October 2020. It has 16 followers and 15 tweets, which makes it the party with the least followers on Twitter. Its reach is very slim and it has not been used actively enough to have any impact.

Peoples Democratic Party (PDP)

The PDP Facebook page was created on April 2, 2012 and has 265,270 followers. This the largest number of followers for any Nigerian political party on Facebook. The page is very actively updated with posts for effective political engagement. Although the level of engagement with its posts is high, it is still not impressive compared to the high number of followers.

The PDP Twitter handle @OfficialPDPNig was created in June 2016. It has approximately 754,000 followers and 29,500 tweets on it, making it the most active political party Twitter handle and the one with the highest following. It is up to date and it is very actively use for engaging the party members, the opposition, the electorate and the general public.

Peoples Redemption Party (PRP)

A verifiable and authentic Facebook page could not be found for PRP.

A Twitter handle for PRP could not be found.

Social Democratic Party (SDP)

The SDP Facebook page was created on March 15, 2017 and has 4,882 followers. The page has been dormant since March 2020 which means there has been no engagement through this medium for about 9 months. When the page was active, there was some level of engagement with its posts, and it is unfortunate that the party has not utilized this medium in about a year.

The SDP handle @officialsdpng was created in January 2018. It has 185 followers and 11 tweets. The most recent tweet was in July 2018. This means it has been dormant and is not being actively utilized.

Young Progressive Party (YPP)

The YPP Facebook page was created on May 19, 2017 and has 15,760 followers. The page is actively used for political engagement which is evident from the frequency of the posts and number of likes, comments and shares. However, there is need to increase followers for wider impact.

The YPP Twitter handle @YPPNational was created in January 2018 and has 5,110 followers. There 2,817 tweets on it, and it is up to date and active with tweets on national and political issues as well as party related events and messages. However, the level of engagement is poor. There is need therefore for an increase in its reach by increasing followers and boosting engagement.

Zenith Labour Party (ZLP)

A verifiable and authentic Facebook page could not be found for ZLP at the national level.

The ZLP Twitter handle @ZLabourParty was created in September 2018 and has 832 followers. It was especially active around the period of the Ondo State gubernatorial elections in October 2020 but seems to have gone dormant after that. It has 669 tweets which shows it has been fairly active. However, it has not been used as a medium of engagement during times out of election season.

ISSUES OBSERVED AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the websites and social media handles of the 18 parties discussed in this paper, the following are our observations and recommendations:

1. Content (Text, Images, Multimedia and Resources)

It was observed that some of the websites and social media pages lacked content. Some of them just had the basic background information but did not have sufficient content that was compelling enough to attract and retain audience. On the Facebook walls of some of the parties, there were spam and viral messages irrelevant to the business of political parties.

It is recommended that political parties improve on the content on their websites and social media pages. Text, images, videos and multimedia messages should tell compelling stories, communicate clearly and be relevant to the agenda of the parties. There are two important strands here. The first is the substantive strand, which relates to the actual content of the messages. Parties need to align themselves with strong ideologies that can separate them from other parties. These ideologies can then guide the content of the messages that are displayed on their platforms, which is likely to appeal to people with those ideological inclinations.

The second strand is the formalistic strand, which relates to the manner in which the content is presented. Parties should hire dedicated social media and communications staff who can present messages to the public in a way that is appealing and likely to captivate them. When both the substance and form of messages are appealing, parties are more likely to attract and retain audience.

2. Accessibility

Accessibility of a website refers to how well a website is designed and developed so it can be used by all people, regardless of disability type or severity of impairment. None of the websites of the parties catered to the needs of users with disabilities and impairments. This negligence on the part of political parties raises questions about their interest in political inclusion.

It is recommended that political parties improve on the accessibility of their websites by catering to the needs of users with disabilities and impairments.

3. Navigability

Website navigability is the ease with which a user can find information on the website. Most of the political parties' websites had fairly good navigability. From home page it was easy to find the different sections and categories of information and resources on most of the websites.

It is recommended that when upgrading or adding new sections to the websites, a user-centric approach should continue to be employed by the website developers.

4. Audience Participation

An effective means of engaging users and visitors to a website is creating avenues for interaction. This can be in form of online polls and surveys, questions and answer sections, call-in live programmes, feedback sections, comment sections etc., all of the websites did very poorly in this regard.

It was observed that most of the political parties had some level of audience participation on their social media pages. This was however limited to comments by followers and visitors on their social media pages/handles. Commenting on posts and tweets is already provided by the social media sites. Beyond this the political parties have done very little in terms of interacting with their members, the electorate and the general public on their websites and social media pages.

It is recommended that political parties improve their websites to allow for meaningful and strategic interactions with users. If they choose to use social media as their preferred form of interaction, links should be created from their websites to this social media pages/handles.

5. Currency

This is how recently the websites and social media pages are updated with information and other relevant content. A major observation was inactivity on most of the websites and social media pages of the political parties after the election seasons. Majority of the websites and social media pages seem to engage their target audiences only during election season and go dormant for weeks or months, and in some cases for years. This observation lends credence to the common perspective that political parties are merely conveyor belts for politicians to get into elective office and not purveyors of political thought or reforms.” Political parties must not be perceived to be interested in the elections alone. Disengaging from the electorate once the election season ends reinforces the negative notions that voters are mere pawns used only for elections and that political parties do not genuinely care for the aspirations of the electorate.

¹⁷Olanrewaju, J. S. (2015). *Political Parties and Poverty of Ideology in Nigeria*. *Afro Asian Journal of Social Sciences*, 6 (3). Retrieved December 12, 2020, from <https://eprints.lmu.edu.ng/569/1/AJOS.pdf>

¹⁸Omotayo, J. S. (2009). *Nigerian Parties and Political Ideology*. *Journal of Alternative Perspectives in the Social Sciences*, 1(3), 612-634.

¹⁹Ali, M. A., & Mohammed, I. S. (2018). *Politics of Inter-Party Defection in Nigeria: Who's Interest?* *Sahel Analyst (AJOM)* (1118-6224), 114-135. Retrieved December 12, 2020, from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/331302384_POLITICS_OF_INTER-PARTY_DEFECTIONS_IN_NIGERIA_WHO%27S_INTEREST

It is recommended that the political parties continue to engage members, the electorate and the general public in and out of election seasons.

6. Pages for Relevant Wings and Sub-groups of the Parties

It is important for parties to cater to different demographics. One feature lacking in most of the official websites of the parties was a section or pages for party sub-groups. For example, there were no links or pages for the youth wings, or the women's group. Political parties ought to project and promote inclusion which is vital to sustainable democracy. They should not just be perceived as being inclusive but should be seen taking practical steps at being inclusive. An organization's website should reflect that organization's values. Political parties' websites ought to be reflective of their value of inclusion.

It is recommended that political parties create sections for their various wings and sub-groups to reflect inclusivity.

7. Multiple and Unverifiable Social Media Accounts

On the popular social media site, Facebook, some of the political parties have multiple pages. This makes it difficult to know which of them is the original page being managed by the legitimate administrators and representatives of the party. This further makes it difficult for the target audience to find whatever information or messages the parties hope to communicate to them. This is especially true in the era of information overload where there are diverse amounts of information competing for audience attention. Capturing and retaining audience attention is not easy in contemporary times, as such complexities and complications in finding messages or ascertaining authentic social media pages will lead to the loss of potential followers.

It is recommended that the political parties contact the administrators of popular social media sites to have unofficial pages taken down. On a social media site like Twitter it is recommended that parties have their handles verified so visitors can know the authentic official handle of parties.

8. Linking Websites and Social Media Pages

A problem with majority of the websites and social media pages of most of the political parties is a disconnect. Most of the websites did not have links to the social media pages of the party. It is understandable that political parties may want to engage their audiences through the use of

²⁰Cordenillo, R. (2017, June 28). Political inclusion is vital to sustainable democracy. Retrieved December 12, 2020, from [www.idea.int: https://www.idea.int/news-media/news/political-inclusion-vital-sustainable-democracy](https://www.idea.int/news-media/news/political-inclusion-vital-sustainable-democracy)

²¹Bulygo, Z. (n.d.). Your Website and the Importance of a Value Proposition. Retrieved December 12, 2020, from [www.neilpatel.com: https://neilpatel.com/blog/importance-of-value-propositions/](https://neilpatel.com/blog/importance-of-value-propositions/)

multiple channels or media to leverage on the advantages the different media and channels provide. However, there should be ways to access the social media pages from the websites and vice-versa.

It is recommended that links be created from official websites to official social media pages and handles so the public can know which are the legitimate pages and handles of the party in light of the proliferation of social media pages and handles by different factions and sub-units of the parties. This is also necessary to simplify and improve the overall experience of visitors to the websites and social media pages.

9. Two-Party System

A final observation relates not to parties' websites and social media pages per se, but to the trend surrounding their followership. The two parties with the highest social media followers are PDP and APC. This reflects the two-party system that exists in Nigeria, with PDP and APC dominating election discourse, campaigns, media time, and so on. It is understandable that these two parties might have a larger followership due to their size, funds, and other resources. However, since the internet provides a cheap and accessible platform that anyone can utilize easily, smaller parties can use this as a key entry point to maximize their reach and grow followership with minimal resources. It is however unfortunate that they have not tapped into this resource, with many of them being inactive or not even having websites and social media pages at all. It is therefore recommended that smaller parties take advantage of these platforms by making frequent posts that are aimed at spurring vibrant discussions with members, as well as attracting more followers.

²²Anderson, S. P., de Palma, A. (2009, April 1). *Competition for Attention in the Information (Overload) Age*. *RAND The Journal of Economics*, 43(1), 1-25. Retrieved December 12, 2020, from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/227376818_Competition_for_Attention_in_Information_Overload_Age

CONCLUSION

In the words of Angerbrandt, “in a democratic context, the value of political parties as an institution of representation is associated with their function as a transmission belt for citizen preferences”. It is therefore crucial for parties to serve as intermediaries by constantly engaging citizens on political issues. The internet is a valuable resource which political parties can use to enhance this communication. Furthermore, parties also benefit from engaging with the electorate because communication is critical to the success of any political campaign, and as such the internet is an indispensable campaign tool in contemporary politicking. Some of the communication advantages political parties can gain from utilizing the internet are:

- 1. Increase in volume of information:** The internet can help political parties disseminate large amounts of information that would normally be very difficult to disseminate using traditional media.²⁴
- 2. Increase in speed of communication:** An advantage of the internet is information can be sent and received almost instantly. As long as all parties are on the web, communication can be instantaneous and in real time.²⁴
- 3. Diverse formats of communication:** The internet affords the opportunity to send out messages in diverse formats: text, audio, video, images, etc.²⁴
- 4. Multiple directions of information flow:** Multi-directional and interactive information flow is greatly enhanced by the internet. It can be one-way, two-way, upward, downward or lateral.²⁴
- 5. Decentralization of communication:** The internet allows for the dissemination of information from different points. Publishing of content is not restricted to a single location or individual.²⁴

Despite the benefits that the internet provides for political parties, it has been observed that political parties in Nigeria are not taking full advantage of this resource. A few parties had no websites and some did not have credible or verifiable pages or handles on the two of the most popular social media sites in the country- Facebook and Twitter. The political parties which had websites and social media pages/handles were not utilizing them optimally.

²³ Angerbrandt, H (2020), *op. cit.*, page 416

²⁴ Conway, M., & Dorner, D. (2004) "An evaluation of New Zealand political party Websites." *Information Research*, 9(4) paper 196. Retrieved December 12, 2020, from <http://InformationR.net/ir/9-4/paper196.html>

With a majority youth population that is increasingly becoming internet savvy as well as the increasing access to the internet, it is in the best interest of the political parties in Nigeria to improve on their websites and the use of social media. This is a potential entry point for smaller parties in particular. With calls for e-voting and other technological innovations in the electioneering process, the future of Nigerian politics might just be on the internet.

Therefore, in order to fulfil their representative function and promote the public discourse that sustains a deliberative democracy, parties have a duty to communicate with the public. Communication technologies such as websites and social media platforms (in particular, Facebook and Twitter) provide an optimal way to do this. In this paper, we have suggested that parties can improve their public communication platforms by paying attention to things such as content, accessibility, navigability, and currency. These should drive audience participation and therefore more effective engagement with the citizenry.



About the Electoral Hub

The Electoral Hub, an organ of the Initiative for Research, Innovation and Advocacy in Development (IRIAD), is a multidisciplinary strategic think-tank which seeks to provide solutions to improve the credibility and integrity of the electoral process. It is conceptualized to complement the roles and activities of the different institutions, stakeholders and drivers of the electoral process and governance. The Electoral Hub's aim is to strengthen electoral governance and accountability in Nigeria through the provision of data and critical analysis supporting the credibility and integrity of the electoral process. We believe that the integrity of the electoral process is crucial in improving the electoral governance architecture and democracy in Nigeria. We also believe in contextual analysis for solutions rooted in the principles of justice and equity

Our core values are knowledge-exchange, inclusion, justice, equity, transparency and accountability.



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