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Media and Youths' Political Engagement during the 2015 Nigerian General Election

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Abstract

The centrality of media to political and civic engagement has received tremendous exploration in many climes across the globe. Similarly, the dynamism that characterised media landscape has oftentimes called for continuing interrogation of the role of media in democratic and civic movements, discourses and participations. While the advent of new/social media led to the comparative exploration of the potency of legacy and novel media, mixed findings have characterised these research endeavours. Besides, most of the findings originated from advanced democratic hemisphere. In view of this gap in the literature, this study sampled 350 Nigerian university students in Kwara state during the 2015 Nigerian General Election to examine the differential contributions of legacy and novel media to the youths' political engagement. Premised on media displacement theory, the study anticipates differences in the contribution of mainstream and new media to youths' political engagement, with new media precipitating more civic engagement than the mainstream media. Findings offer important contributions on the role of media to youths' political engagement in general and the continuing importance of the mainstream media to civic and political participation among the youths.

Keywords: displacement theory; legacy media; novel media; youth; political engagement.

1. Introduction

THIS centrality of the media to the lives of individuals, groups, community and nations was at the heart of the earliest media effects research championed by Lazarsfeld and his colleagues, resuscitation of media effects research, and evolutions of theories such as agenda-setting, spiral of silence, diffusion of news, cultivation, among others (Baran & Davis, 2012; DeFleur, 2010; Severin & Tankard, 2010). Across media epochs, scholars have dedicated attentions to exploration of the contributions of the media to civic and political development. From Erie County's study, where the Two-step flow theory emerged, to Chapel Hill's study, that offered the laboratory for the

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emergence of Agenda-setting theory, the effects of the legacy media of newspapers, radio and television on politics and elections have documented findings that challenged scholars and helped the growth of scholarship and theory development in mass communication. Similarly, the emergence of new novel media, powered by the Internet and digital mobile devices, has led to challenge, validation, and re-evaluation of certain assumptions about the mediated lived experiences of members of public.

Always central to the effects of changing media landscape are, however, the youths. From fear and danger of the influence of exposure to television violence on aggressive behaviour to how the new and social media diminish youths' civic and political engagement (Withers & Sheldon, 2008), researchers provide evidences of how consumption of certain media diet affect youths' social and political lives (Bennett, 2012; Callejo, 2013; Luengo & Coimbra-Mesquita, 2013). Being the mediator between citizens and their external environments, the media system occupies the position of the societal central nervous system, distributing impulses to the other parts of the social system with a view to maintaining equilibrium or causing a change. This humongous task expected of the media usually precipitates concerns over any change in the media landscape.

While there are many facets to understanding how evolution of and revolution in the media landscape impact society, crystallising political implications of *mediamorphosis* has gained prominence among a number of scholars. Being one of the most important resources in helping citizens to share common orientation about the external world (Couldry, Livingstone & Markham, 2007; Lippmann, 1922), the media system is central to the understanding of roles of other societal socialisation institutions and the building of consensus that are important in forging public connection and civic engagement (McCombs, 1997; Mustapha, 2014; Shaw & Martin, 1992). Hence, exploration of the impact of changing media landscape, that is towering the Internet-enabled new media over the mainstream media, has gained currency among political communication and media effects researchers.

The concern about what new media are doing to youths' political involvement evolved from the envisaged dwindling political participation among the youths in the past decades. Symptomatized by waning political interest, decreasing participation in community, and diminishing electoral turn out (Bakker & de Vreese, 2011), the internet has been implicated in declining social and political life of the youth (Putnam, 2000). Some scholars, however, argued that internet and the new media, rather than causing political passivity, contribute to efficacious expressive stance – a hallmark of youths' political activism (Bucy & Gregson, 2001; Clarke, 2010). Using the 2008 U.S. presidential contest as a reference, Bakker and de Vreese (2011) documented how Barak Obama leveraged on social media of Facebook, YouTube and Twitter to attract the supports of younger people who are adept at using the novel media.

Besides, the debate on the consequences of new media for political life, the central notion that the mainstream media serve as agents of mediated politic and mediated public connection has been subjected to a test of revalidation. Based on the notion of media displacement hypothesis, it has been argued that time spent on the new media crowd out the importance attached to the mainstream media as powerful democratic resources (Lee, & Leung, 2006; Ferguson & Perse, 2000). While findings on whether the new media are displacing the mainstream media remained mixed, research on this scenario has been *Western-centric*. Little, if any, attention has been devoted to testing

the differential role of mainstream and new media in youths' political engagement in developing countries in general and Nigeria in particular, even as this demographic group remains active on the new media and constitutes a fair share of the Nigerian electorate. This study intends to fill the gap in the literature.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Central to the understanding of how dynamism in the media landscape impacts on the political sphere, particularly among the youths, are literature explicating media displacement theoretical model, media and politic as well as youths' media use for political engagement. This section provides the state of affairs of how the mainstream and new/social media play out in political engagement of the youth.

2.1. Media Displacement Theory

Media displacement presupposes permanent replacement of a particular medium by another that meets the functions of previous media in a more effective and efficient ways. According to Palekar and Sadera (2012: 7) "the logic behind displacement theory is that the amount of time available for media consumption is limited and therefore one may expect a reduction in the time spent on existing media over a new and emerging media." Different from substitution effect, which is a form of temporary replacement, displacement has a permanent feature over time and occurs because of public perception of the emerging medium as superior to the extant ones in terms of performance (Ha & Fang, 2012).

Lee and Leung (2006) posit that the arrival of a new medium always heralds the displacement of existing ones because of time and resource constraints. According to these scholars, people's time and money are fixed and spending these resources on one medium reduces the chance of doing same on other media. Concordantly, McCombs (1972), using principle of relative constancy, substantiated the role of time and financial resources on audience's ability to use a plethora of media thus giving vent to the assertion that a medium can be displaced by perceived superiority of a competing alternative. Referring to displacement as limited resource perspective, this scholar argues that the more time we spend with one medium, the less we attend to other communicative engagements. Gurevitch, Coleman and Blumler (2009) also express strong reprobation about intimate relationship between politics and the mass media in general and television in particular since the arrival of the Internet. Hence, they hold that the Internet is not only altering the contour of media-politics symbiosis, but displacing the mainstream media in favour of the new media. Based on time budget theory, Ha and Fang (2012: 6) believe that limited time would lead to displacement:

> There is only a fixed 24 h a day, and that time spent with any new activity has to be appropriated from existing activities. In other words, the time spent on computers must come at the expense of other activities, including the use of traditional mass media, which is the foundation of displacement studies.

On the empirical plain, studies have documented conflicting reports on media displacement hypothesis (Cai, 2005; Ha & Fang, 2012; Lee & Leung, 2006; Palekar & Sadera, 2012). In a

review of studies on displacement effect of television on the prior media, scholars aver that time spent on television limits time allocated to listening to radio, reading comic books, and attending movie in theatres (Cai, 2005; Kestnbaum, Robinson, Neustadtl & Alvarez, 2002). Ferguson and Perse (2000) also submit that the Internet can displace television if it offers more entertainment for the youths. Making reference to the works of a number of scholars, De Waal and Schoenbach (2010) explicate on how functional equivalence hypothesis explains the possibility of new medium displacing the extant ones.

In a more elaborate study, Lee and Leung (2006) examine displacement effect from media-centric and user-centric perspectives. Premised on niche and media richness theories and "more-less" strategy, these scholars conclude that "the more time that a user spends on a new medium as a consequence of new features, the less time they will spend on old media". Besides positing that media-centric approach works on the principle of technological determinism, they surmise that researchers exploring this approach focus on how attributes of new media affect the existing media. With regards to user-centric approach, Lee and Leung ascribe possibility of displacement to users' needs and gratifications and offer that "users of new media platform on the internet may continue to use the traditional platforms of newspapers, television and radio and vice versa, in so far as both platforms met their needs.

Some scholars are, however, of the belief that a new medium supplements, rather than displaces, the existing ones. According to Dutta-Bergman (2004), people use new and old media simultaneously thus maximising information and entertainment derivable from the media. Hence, Lin (2001) argues that radio did not replace recording music, while television did not become a substitute of cinema. From the niche theoretical prism Dimmick, Feaster and Hoplamazian (2010) explore the niche superiority between traditional and new mobile media. They found that television and newspapers have niche superiority on news and weather report while mobile media enjoy superiority in time and space. Additionally, the niche superiority of traditional media in terms of time and space reveals that newspapers are mostly read in the morning, listening to radio occurs during morning and afternoon drive time while television or cable news are watched mostly in the evening. From the foregoing, it could be deduced that media displacement effect is far from being a settled issue among the scholars. These positions reveal mixed findings on displacement effects of new media, thus showing that both legacy and novel media could function as political information resources.

2.2. Media, Politic and Political Engagement

Information has been adjudged to be central to political participation and civic engagement among citizens of all ages. This notion is based on the belief that information contributes to acquisition of political cognitions, which subsequently precipitates political interests that eventually dovetail into participatory acts. Making information affordable, the mass media of communication, from newspapers to the electronic media of radio and television as well as contemporary digitalized media, have been definers of political behaviour of the citizens.

The notion that informed citizenry is at the core of liberal democratic politics reinforces the pre-eminence of the media in the creation of a platform for information exchange, public debate

and rational engagement between the leaders and the led. Popularly christened the Fourth Estate for its role in holding the leaders accountable to the led, performing watchdog role and offering a free marketplace of ideas, the grand position of the media in liberal political milieus has received impetus of a garland status from philosophers, leaders and scholars alike (McQuail, 2005; Mustapha, Ahmad & Abubakar, 2014).

The First Amendment to the United States' constitution, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, as well as constitutions of many democracies accord the freedom of expression and of the press a prime of place. In Nigerian, for instance, the 1999 constitution, via the Section 22, confers on the media the role of the Fourth Estate: "The press, radio, television and other agencies of the media shall at all times be free to uphold the responsibility and accountability of the government to the people." With quintessential roles such as information dissemination, political education, mass mobilisation, providing platform for political debate, among others, the mass media could make or mar a political process and facilitate or inhibit good governance. This stance was poignantly expressed by Akinfeleye's (2003) who surmises that the press can be the Fourth Estate of the Realm or the Fourth Estate of the Wreck, depending on how responsible they handle their onerous roles.

In an inventory of the role of Nigeria media since the return of the country to democratic regime in 1999, scholars have provided gallant roles such as accountability and whistle blowing, investigating and reporting scandals in high places and bringing the perpetrators to justice and public opprobrium, championing electoral reforms, among others, to the media (Ojo, 2009; Omoera, 2010). Although media are credited with awesome power to reflect the world's events into the living rooms of their audience, but by their imposition of synthetic reality on their teeming audience they are far from offering a perfect mirror of reality (Funkhouser & Shaw, 1990). While communication has been central to human engagement from the time immemorial, the 17th century's invention of the printing press, advent of electronic medium of radio and television and evolution of the Internet and its media offspring have fundamentally shaped how ideas are communicated, information disseminated, entertainment diffused, and, of course, how public discourses are debated in the public arena. The changing mode of media deliverance in the contemporary media ecology is thus at the heart of the debate about whether the new media substitute or complement the mainstream media.

2.3. 'Old' Media, 'New' Media and Political Communication

The traditional media, as the mainstream media of newspaper, radio and television are sometimes addressed, enjoyed the monopoly of vertical transmission of information till the arrival of the new media. Besides playing the role of mediator between the external environment and what come to be common knowledge of the audience about the society, they provide entertainment, social integration role, and help in cultural transmission. In performing these roles, the media have been loved for their functional roles and loathed for their dysfunctional influences (Baran & Davis, 2012; Lazarsfeld & Merton, 1948/2000). There is no doubt, however, that mass media are necessary agents of participatory democracy and promoters of good governance.

Through unfettered flow of information and provision of platform for rational debate, the media help in institutionalising civic culture and assist in citizens' political socialisation. As agents of political education, the media also help in raising citizens' political cognitions, political complexity and civic competence. Hence, scholars refer to the mass media as the oxygen, lifeblood and central nervous system of the society (Leeson, 2008; Mustapha, 2007; Mustapha, Ahmad & Abubakar, 2014). Describing the media as political actor, McNair (2003) posits that the media, through gathering, production and dissemination of news, help define political reality. Describing the power of the media and their effect on political agenda and realities, particularly during the election, Foster (2010: 141) holds that:

> ...the evolution of party political communications reflects a widespread belief that the media plays a vital part in shaping political outcome. This is especially so in respect of elections, during which the main protagonists devote huge resources to their campaigns in the hope of exploiting media influence.

By conventional reasoning, the pedestal on which the media system is placed in all democratic climes implies unregulated marketplace of ideas, which should stimulate democratic political culture among the citizens. However, reports from the world over present a picture of democratic deficit in which the media, the expected political elixir, being the cause of political apathy and malaise via extreme commercialism (Alfaro, 2006; Herman & Chomsky, 2002; McChesney, 1999). In *Rich Media, Poor Democracy*, McChesney (1999), presents a gloomy picture of decline in democratic culture resulting from extreme commercialisation of the media. According to him, media concentration and consolidation as well as hyper-commercialism might have resulted into corporate media explosion and extreme profiteering; they denigrate journalism, public service, and obviously result to corresponding implosion of public life. The fear as to the ability of the media, particularly of the mainstream classification, to foster the free space necessary to grow democracy and advance good governance was perhaps responsible for the trust granted to the inherently democratic new media of communication.

The circumspections resulting from the inability of the mainstream media to advance democratic causes, due in part to media bias (McNair, 2003) and political economy (Herman & Chomsky, 2002), have enabled the Internet and the new media to become the new platforms to sustain political activism. More importantly, the flexibility, portability, interactivity and hyper-textual characteristics of the new media allow for horizontal communication that facilitate easy mobilisation of citizens. The ability of the Internet and other digital media to turn the hitherto information consumers to concomitant information producers and consumers (prosumers) gives the digital platforms an enviable democratic credential. While the mainstream media have been found to be normatively central to development of democratic consciousness and civic engagement, the arrival of the new and social media has forthwith pauses the seemingly 'cast-in-stone' trust imposed on them as the oxygenating powerhouse of democracy.

Branded as the Fifth Estate (Newman, Dutton & Blank, 2012) the digital media have come to reshape the communication ecology in a way that is intriguing, yet interesting. Besides being central to everyday lives, work and social engagements of members of the contemporary networked society, digital media have challenged the quality of journalism and reduced the information asymmetry existing between the leaders and the led. According to Bennett (2003: 146), "the pu-

blic sphere created by the Internet and the Web are more than just parallel information universes that existed independently of the mass media." Through provision of alternative communication space where information can be collected, processed, distributed and consumed with minimal if any editorial moderation, the digital media platforms occupy important juncture in the needed mediatised connection necessary for the reawakening of the hitherto politically apathetic and passive citizens. This awesome power of digital media contributes the *Arab Spring* to the conceptual rapporteurs of new media effects.

Notwithstanding the inherent and potent democratic attributes of the Internet and other digital media, some scholars are still of the views that structural factors, rather than the technology alone, are important in unpacking the functionalities and usefulness of the Internet and digital media for democratic practices. Wallis (2003), for instance, decries the Americano-centric nature of the debates on electronic democracy. Citing a number of scholars, Mustapha and Wok (2014) also give account of how digital media's democratising power has been vilified on the account of their potential to increase digital divide and knowledge-gap, intensify atomisation of the masses and precipitate erosion of social capital.

In all, the superiority of the new media over the old media, in terms of their democratising functionality, is not conclusively affirmative. The contemporary media ecology, therefore, calls for active collaboration among all the stakeholders. The era of horizontal dissemination of information from the media organisation to the hapless audience is over. The emergence of the Fifth Estate, which is undergoing serious exploration and exploitation by critical political actors, is a *fait accompli*. It is thus necessary for all to be knowledgeable in the art of blending the structural efficiency of the Fourth Estate with the democratising prowess of the Fifth Estate in order to grow nations' democracy and, by extension, good governance. More importantly, knowing how the youths' affinity with digital apparatuses impact on their civic life in the face of evidences that are conflictual needs continuing and contextual exploration.

2.4. New Media, Youth and Political Engagement

Being young, educated and urbane, contemporary youths are adept at embracing innovation and be digitalised in their daily chores. The information resource power of the Internet and digital media has thus been seen as advantageous to political cognitions and sophistications of the young people across the world. The continuing dynamism characterising the development of digital media though makes it impossible to conclude on how the technology is influencing political life of the youth, available evidence supports both the prospects and vulnerabilities of the devices. Empirical supports have thus been adduced for the inherent advantages and disadvantages of the new media for youths' political engagement (Bakker & de Vreese, 2011; Bennett, 2012; Mustapha & Wok, 2014).

Supporting the notion of youth digital media use and enhanced political participation, Östman (2012) argues that the expressive, performative and collaborative features of digital media, which allows for distribution of user-generated content (UGC) contribute to both online and offline political participation among Swedish young people. In yet another study in Netherland, Bakker and de Vreese (2011) found support for enhanced political participation among 'citizens of tomorrow'

using new and social media than what the traditional media offer. Mustapha and Wok (2014) also validate the political participation reinforcement inherent in using digital media among diasporic Nigerians in Malaysia.

Conversely, other scholars have found digital media to be culpable agents of citizens' fragmentation that hinders collective action. For example, Bennett (2012) claims that digital media technology allows for social fragmentation and personalisation of politics, thus declining group loyalties and reinforcing extreme commitment to issues concerning personal lifestyle at the expense of community consensus among the youth. In a study of three types of Facebook users' civic engagement, defined by members of political parties, members of interest organisations, and non-members, Gustafsson (2012) found that non-members remain politically passive, even when they are exposed to political content. He concludes that using Internet and Facebook does not drive previously inactive respondents to political participation. Overall, there is no finality on the democratising potential or the otherwise of the new media. Hence, continuing exploration of the issue in different contexts and locales will crystallise the grey matter the development has become.

2.5. Hypotheses

In view of the inconsistencies regarding findings on displacement effect, youths' usage of new/social media for their everyday activities, demographic differences in media use and unending centrality of media to democracy, politics and good governance, the following hypotheses are advanced:

H1: There is no displacement effect of new media on mainstream media as tools for youth's political engagement

H2: There are differences in the use of mainstream and new media for political participation among the youth

H3: There are demographic differences in the use of mainstream and new media for political participation among the youth

3. METHODOLOGY

Using a cross-sectional research design, this study gathered data during the 2015 Nigerian General Election. To test the hypotheses advanced, a part of election study data collected during the general election were analysed. Using systematic random sampling technique, 350 undergraduate and postgraduate students were sampled from a sampling frame consisting of students in social sciences and humanities programme at the University of Ilorin and Kwara State University between February and March, 2015.

Besides collecting data on respondents' demographic variable and patterns of mainstream and new media use, constructs such as mainstream media use for political engagement, new/social media use for political engagement were measured using ten items each on a 5-point Likert scales. To ascertain the reliability of the items as good measures, therefore, Cronbach's Alpha measure were computed and both (mainstream media use for political involvement α=.83 and new/social media use α=.93) attained above α=.70 benchmark (see Field, 2009; Phallant, 2007).

Using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 21, data collected were cleaned and analysed using frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations for descriptive purposes. To test the hypotheses, scaled items used in measuring the main constructs (mainstream media use for political engagement and new/social media use for political engagement) were computed to obtain standardized indexes. Correlation, paired-sample t-test and independent sample t-test were thus used to test the hypotheses.

4. RESULTS

4.1. Respondents' demographic characteristics

Table 1 presents the results of respondents' demographic characteristics. The age range of the respondents in this study is between 18 and 35 (M=22.54, SD=3.82). When the age was recoded into categories, those between the age of 18 and 24 years (68.5%) constitute the highest class. The female (53.3%) in this study are more than male; while the Muslims (53.9%) enjoy a slight majority over the Christians. There are more undergraduate (57.6%) than the postgraduate students, while the southerners (52.8%) slightly outnumbered the northerners. The patterns seen in the demographic characteristics of the respondents mirror the demographic characteristic of the population of the study.

Being the gateway to the northern part of the country, Kwara state, where this study was conducted, attracts more southerners seeking higher education because of the relative peace being enjoyed in the state and socio-cultural and linguistic affinity, particularly with the south westerners. The slight Muslim majority has a natural linkage with the Islamic nature of the Ilorin Emirate where the two universities used in this study domiciled.

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of the respondents

Demographic Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
Age		
18-24 years old	220	68.5
25-35 years old	101	31.5
Total (M=22.54, SD=3.82, Min=18, Max=35)	**321**	**100.0**
Gender		
Female	170	53.3
Male	149	46.7
Total	**319**	**100.0**
Current Programme		
Undergraduate	184	57.6
Postgraduate	135	42.4
Total	**319**	**100.0**
Religion		
Christianity	148	46.1
Islam	173	53.9
Total	**321**	**100.0**
Geopolitical Region		
Northerners	144	47.2
Southerners	161	52.8
Total	**305**	**100.0**

4.2. Respondents' media use pattern

Respondents' media use patterns is presented in Table 2. Although measures of hours spent on the radio, television and the Internet in a day was measured at interval level, just as reading newspapers was measured using number of days read newspapers in a week; they were recorded into categorical variable for ease of analysis. On the average, respondent reads newspapers at least 4 days in a week (M=4.17, SD=1.68). The results also reveal a preponderance of Internet usage (M=4.45, SD=1.28) over traditional media of radio (M=4.11, SD=1.42) and television (M=3.30, SD=1.40) as measured by number of hours a day spent on these media platforms.

It is not surprising that hours spent on the Internet surpassed time spent on radio and television given the usage of Internet-accessible mobile phones among contemporary young people. The fact that students spent more time listening to radio than watching television could be attributed to lack of access. Most students stay in the hostels and only have access to television in the common room. Being a portable medium and the possibility of its access via mobile phone may have increased time spent on the radio than television. This result also supports Pew Internet &

American Life Project's (Pew 2008) findings which showed an upward shift in the use of radio for political information from 15% in 2004 to 21% in 2008 (Gurevitch, Coleman & Blumler, 2009).

With regards to ownership of new/social media accounts, WhatsApp leads the pack, with almost nine in ten respondents (89.5%) claiming its usage. This is followed by ownership of Facebook account (88.6%). Social media in least usage among the respondents include the likes of Linkedin, Skype, Viber, Wechat, etc. (59.4%). Overall, these results show that both the legacy and the novel media enjoy patronage among youths sampled in this study.

Table 2. Respondents' media use patterns

Media Use Patterns	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Newspapers		
591-3 days	119	37.1
4 days	59	18.4
5-7 days	143	44.5
Total (M=4.17, SD=1.68)	**321**	**100.0**
Radio		
1-2 hours daily	49	15.7
3-4 hours daily	129	41.2
5-6 hours daily	135	43.1
Total (M=4.11, SD=1.42)	**313**	**100.0**
Television		
1-2 hours daily	100	32.7
3-4 hours daily	142	46.4
5-6 hours daily	64	20.9
Total (M=3.30, SD=1.40)	**306**	**100.0**
Internet		
1-2 hours daily	30	9.5
3-4 hours daily	115	36.5
5-6 hours daily	170	54.0
Total (M=4.45, SD=1.28)	**315**	**100.0**
New/Social Media Account	**Yes**	**No**
BBM	73.7	26.3
Facebook	88.6	11.4
Instagram	62.6	37.4
Twitter	57.6	42.4
WhatsApp	89.5	10.5
Others (Linkedin, Skype, Viber, Wechat, etc.)	59.4	40.6

4.3. Mainstream media and political engagement

Table 3 presents a description of mainstream media use for political engagement among the respondents. Respondents show average use of mainstream media for political engagement on the whole (M=2.60, SD=1.18). Specifically, they agreed that their political interest is motivated by political news on the television (M=3.18, SD=1.28). They also tend towards agreement on listening to phone-in programmes on the television (M=2.95, SD=1.18), motivated by political news on the radio (M=2.93, SD=1.23) and listening to phone-in programmes on the radio (M-2.88, SD-1.30). They are, however, not at home with sending letters to the editor (M=2.09, SD=1.09).

Table 3. Mainstream media use for political engagement

Mainstream Media Use for Political Engagement	**Means**	**SD**
I listen to phone-in political programme on the radio	2.88	1.30
I listen to phone-in political programme on the TV	2.95	1.18
I call and contribute to phone-in political programme on the radio	2.15	1.13
I call and contribute to phone-in political programme on the TV	2.13	1.13
I can hold my political views and opinions on the radio	2.74	1.16
I can hold my political views and opinions on the TV	2.77	1.11
I send letter to editor on political issues of concern	2.09	1.09
I write and publish articles on political issues on newspapers	2.19	1.17
Political news on the radio motivates my interest on politics	2.93	1.23
Political news on the TV motivates my interest in politics	3.18	1.28
Total	**2.60**	**1.18**

4.4. New/social media and political engagement

Using new/social media for political engagement, as seen in Table 4, generally show slight agreement among the respondents (M=2.73, SD=1.29). The activity that respondents performed the most on the new/social media during the 2015 general election was posting comments (M=3.05, SD=1.29). This was followed by promoting own views (M=2.87, SD=1.30), seeking support for preferred candidate (M=2.80, SD=1.31), sharing post about the election (M=2.78, SD=1.36), and openly supporting political party of interest (M=2.78, SD=1.26). The respondents nonetheless agreed that attacking opposing views about the election (M-2.40, SD=1.25) was the least activity they engaged in on the new/social media.

Table 4. New/social media use for political engagement

New/Social Media Use for Political Engagement	**Means**	**SD**
I post news on 2015 election on new/social media	2.51	1.30
I share posts on 2015 election on new/social media	2.78	1.36
I post comment on 2015 election on new/social media	3.05	1.29
I promote my views on 2015 election on the new/social media	2.87	1.30
I attack opposing views on 2015 election on the new/social media	2.40	1.25
I openly support my preferred party on the new/social media	2.78	1.26
I seek support for my preferred party from my friends and relatives on the new/social media	2.72	1.30
I openly support my preferred candidate on the new/social media	2.80	1.31
I seek support for my preferred candidate on the new/social media	2.77	1.24
I enjoy engaging in political argument on the new/social media	2.60	1.27
Total	**2.73**	**1.29**

4.5. Test of the hypotheses

Hypothesis 1 of this study states that *there is no displacement effect of new media on mainstream media as tools for civic engagement*. To test this hypothesis, computed indexes of the main constructs (mainstream media use and new/social media use) were correlated, using Pearson's Movement Correlation Coefficient. The result revealed a moderate, positive and significant correlation (r=.519, p=.001). Controlling for demographic variables, the correlations between the two constructs still remain positive and statistically significant (Table 5). This means that there is no displacement effects of new/social media on mainstream media as resources for political engagement. Hence, the hypothesis is supported.

Table 5. Correlations between mainstream and new/social media use

Correlations	***r***	**p**
Bivariate (mainstream media and new/social media use)	.519	0.01
Partial Correlations	.509	0.01
Gender	.538	0.01
Religion	.538	0.01
Geopolitical Region		

Hypothesis 2 holds that THERE ARE DIFFERENCES IN THE USE OF MAINSTREAM AND NEW MEDIA FOR POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AMONG THE YOUTH. To test this hypothesis, a paired-sample t-test was conducted. The results of the test (Table 6) show that respondents differ in terms of their usage of mainstream media and new/social media as tools for political engagement (t=-2.78, df=274, p=.006), with new/social media (M=2.71, SD=1.00) being used more for youth's political engagement than the mainstream media (M=2.56, p=0.73). Therefore, the hypothesis is fully supported.

Table 6. Differences in mainstream media and new/social media use

Descriptive	**Media Type**		**t-test**		
	Mainstream Media	**New/Social Media**	**t**	**df**	**p**
N	275	275	-2.78	274	.006
Mean	2.56	2.71			
Std. Deviation	0.73	1.00			

The results on Table 7 present findings on the test of the hypothesis 3, which says that *there are demographic differences in the use of mainstream and new media for political participation among the youth*.

In terms of mainstream media use, only respondents of different gender classification differ (t=1.99, df=284, p=.048), with male (M=2.69, SD=0.73) claiming that they are using mainstream media for political engagement than their female counterparts (M=2.50, SD=0.74).

Using new/social media for political engagement, however, differs between respondents of different gender subgroups (t=4.32, df=294, p=.001). Male respondents (M=3.00, SD=0.95) claimed using new/social media for political engagement than the female respondents (M=2.51, SD=1.00) during the 2015 Nigerian general election. Similarly, respondents of Islamic faith differs on their use of new/social media for political engagement from their Christian counterparts (t=-2.44, df=296, p=.015). Muslim respondents (M=2.86, SD=0.97) exceed the Christian respondents (M=2.57, SD=1.01) in the use of social media for political engagement. These results partially uphold the hypothesized notion that respondents' demographic characteristics moderate media use for political engagement.

Table 7. Demographic differences in mainstream and new/social media use

Demographics/Media Type	**N**	**M**	**SD**	**t**	**df**	**p**
Mainstream Media						
Gender						
Male	**133**	**2.67**	**0.73**	**1.99**	**284**	**.048**
Female	**153**	**2.50**	**0.74**			
Religion						
Christianity	133	2.65	0.75	1.50	286	.134
Islam	155	2.51	0.73			
Geopolitical Region						
Northerners	132	2.60	0.75	0.54	270	.587
Southerners	140	2.51	0.75			
New/Social Media						
Gender						
Male	**133**	**3.00**	**0.95**	**4.32**	**294**	**.001**
Female	**163**	**2.51**	**1.00**			
Religion						
Christianity	**135**	**2.57**	**0.97**	**-2.44**	**296**	**.015**
Islam	**163**	**2.86**	**1.01**			
Geopolitical Region						
Northerners	136	2.76	0.95	0.51	280	.610
Southerners	146	2.70	1.08			

5. DISCUSSION

This study examines the central role ascribed to the media in the perfect ordering and governing of the society, political apathy among the young people, and the debate over the renewed power of media resulting from the changing media ecology in a Nigerian setting during the 2015 general election. As a period characterised by heightened people's political orientation, the election time provides a perfect laboratory to explore the activities of media and other political actors. Since the electorate cannot be in all places where political events happen, the media bridge the gap between the reality and public perceptions. However, scholars have doubted the faithfulness of the media in delivering the needed informational resources that could guarantee rational choices among the citizens (Lazarsfeld & Merton, 1948; Mustapha, Ahmad & Abubakar, 2014; Severin & Tankard, 2010).

Based on media bias model and capitalistic political economy theory, the traditional media have been found to be creating and/or reinforcing democratic malaise and political apathy

(D'Alessio & Allen, 2000; Luengo & Coimbra-Mesquita, 2013; Herman & Chomsky, 2002). The advent of digital media technologies, with democratising features, has, however, provided a ray of hope that citizens' civic interests would be reawakened. The ability of the digital media to afford citizens the opportunity to produce, consume and redistribute news and information with minimal, if any gatekeeping has also been viewed as a threat to the creation of community consensus and public connection that is necessary to advance democratic culture and demand for good governance. It has equally been argued that attending to new media displaces citizens from other prior media. All these precipitated inquiry into displacement effect and its implication for civic and political participation. Since major findings on this scenario have been from advanced democracies, this study offers a perspective from the developing country.

Generally, findings from this study support the notion that mass media in general, and the new media of late, are powerful political and democratic resources. The study also debunks the assertion that youth, due to their unbridled contact with digital media, are shut out from the political realities of their external environment. Besides their good use of the new/social media, this study supports the notion that traditional/mainstream media are still fundamental to the life of the youth and contribute to their political participation. This result corroborates Callejo's (2013) findings that document pre-eminence of television use over the Internet among Spanish adolescents and young adults. Though being used lesser than the new/social media in this study, the fact that traditional media are still a part of the youth's political media diet supports complimentary rather than substitution effect of new media on the traditional media.

Importantly this study replicates previous findings regarding demographic differences in youth's media use on the one hand, and youth's political media use on the other hand. This is a good news given the growing nature of Nigerian democracy as it crystallises the need to continually connecting with political realities. Youth's political activism online, as modestly demonstrated in the findings of this study, is also promising. Given the demonstrable evidence that both the legacy and the new media contribute to youths' political engagement, the need to impose pubic and social responsibility obligation on media of any hue becomes imperative. This conditionality to deliver contents that serve certain social objectives will not only be beneficial to the teeming producers, consumers and prosumers, but the entire citizenry, the entire country and the entire mankind.

6. Conclusion

We set out to explore youths' political media use vis-à-vis their civic engagement during the 2015 Nigerian presidential election. Based on the presumed centrality of media to political cognition, socialisation and participation and how changing media landscape impinges on youth media use for civic engagement, this study compares how legacy (mainstream) and novel (new/social) media differ in their political functions for the youths. Findings support the political functionality of the media to the youth in general and incremental usefulness of the new media forms in a complimentary model in particular. Although, a number of demographic differences were noted in this study, they were not big enough to affirm gross differences in youth's media-political behaviours.

Continuing political contributions of mainstream media in the face of changing media landscape is also established.

Being an exploratory study, the findings here though offer certain useful insights on the impact of changing media ecology on youth's civic engagement, have some apparent limitations. The study chose the election time to collect data, a period when citizens' orientation to external environment is usually on the high side. Findings may thus be an artefact of the time rather than true reflection of youth's ordinary day lifestyle. A study examining youth's political media use in the inter-election times could provide a robust picture of young people media use for politics and other affairs.

The cross-sectional nature of the study might have provided a snapshot of this important sociology and politics of media use, longitudinal exploration of media use could offer better understanding of how changing trends impinge on youth's media uses and effects. In the same token, a qualitative exploration would definitely offer data that could crystallise issues that mere respondents' self-reporting cannot bring to the fore. Future study can also test rigorous causal hypotheses with a view to contributing to the model of media displacement effect. These limitations notwithstanding, the study contributes a modest clarification on the continuing viability of the mainstream media amidst the vagaries in the changing media landscape.

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