



## Unveiling Political Participation Dynamics: The Impact of Social Media Skits on Youth Engagement in the 2023 Nigerian General Elections

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**Abstract.** The issue of apathy among young people towards participating in political activities, such as campaigns and voting, has sparked numerous discussions throughout Nigeria. Notably, the 2023 General Election in Nigeria witnessed a noteworthy increase in youth involvement in political activities. However, the extent to which this participation can be attributed to political campaigns and mobilization on social media, particularly through the use of media skits, remains unclear. This study explores the role of social media skits in shaping youth political engagement during the 2023 general election in Nigeria. With the surge of social media as a political tool and the unique infusion of creative skits, this research addresses the impact on youth participation, perceptions of political candidates, and potential drawbacks of this digital phenomenon. Grounded in Cultivation Theory, the study utilises a descriptive survey approach with 340 participants in Lagos State, Nigeria. Findings indicate that social media skits positively influence youth political knowledge and behaviour, yet concerns about misinformation emerge. Recommendations encompass fact-checking for content creators, critical media literacy for youths, comprehensive social media strategies for political parties, and the implementation of regulatory frameworks by governments to balance freedom of expression and prevent misinformation. The study contributes insights into leveraging social media for effective youth engagement in political discourse.

**Keywords:** General election, media skits, politics, social media, youths

### 1. Introduction

Nigeria, with its burgeoning youth population, has witnessed a paradigm shift in the way political

discourse unfolds. The emergence of social media as a prominent platform for information dissemination and community building has redefined political engagement, providing a unique space for the youth to voice their opinions, concerns, and aspirations (Sanusi, Adelabu & Esiri, 2015; Ajodo-Adebanjko, 2018). Against this backdrop, the infusion of creative and often humorous political skits into the digital sphere has become a noteworthy phenomenon deserving scholarly attention. The 2023 general election in Nigeria saw a new dimension different from the usual, due to the active role of social media.

This implies that a good number of Nigerians have now tapped into different social media platforms (Olumuji & Okwoli, 2020). The media platforms have been identified as a key factor that has changed the way politics and elections used to be, bringing everyone together to participate and share their opinion freely.

The youth demographic in Nigeria constitutes a significant voting bloc, and harnessing their support is crucial for any successful political campaign (Ajodo-Adebanjko, 2018). Social media provided a means to bridge the gap between election and the younger generation (Allcott & Gentzkow, 2017; Okunbor, 2022). By leveraging popular social media platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube, skit creators crafted humorous, relatable, and shareable content that resonated with young voters.

Social media skits offered a unique opportunity to political parties in the elections to present their candidates at the grass roots in a manner socially friendly and acceptable by the electorates (Tsandzana, 2023). Instead of relying solely on traditional campaign speeches and press conferences, the skits

added a sense of humor, to everyday interactions. This allowed voters to see a more approachable side of the candidates, fostering a sense of familiarity and trust. By breaking down barriers, the skits helped bridged the barrier between the voters (youths in particular) and political candidates.

This study, therefore, examines the Nigerian youth and political participation in the 2023 General Election using social media skits. It gives issues on how social media skits played key roles in engendering youth participation in the General Election that manifests in the form of debates on probity, accountability, transparency, anti-democratic cultural reviews, and advocacy for action. This is very important because of how Nigeria's democratic space continues to grow with mixed signs.

### 1.1 Objectives of Study

- To determine the place of social media skits in youth knowledge of politics.
- To ascertain the influence of social media skits on youth political behavior, such as voting, attending political rallies, and engaging in political discussions.
- To examine the potential drawbacks and limitations of social media skits as a means of political engagement among young people.

### Research Questions

- What is the place of social media skits in youth knowledge of politics?
- What is the influence of social media skits on youth political behavior, such as voting, attending political rallies, and engaging in political discussions?
- What are the potential drawbacks and limitations of social media skits as a means of political engagement among young people?

### 2. Theoretical Review

Cultivation Theory holds that long-term exposure to media shapes how media consumers perceive the world and conduct themselves. The cultivation hypothesis states that the more people are engaged on a media platform, the more likely they are to hold a view of reality closer to media's depiction (Anaeto, Onabajo, & Osifeso, 2008; Baran & Davis, 2010). For many individuals, the distorted and partial reality portrayed in media represents what the world is "really" like.

This theory implies that those exposed to media interpret social realities according to how such realities are portrayed in the media (Anaeto, Onabajo, & Osifeso, 2008). Cultivation theory is a communications and sociological framework which posits that long-term exposure to media shapes how the consumers of media perceive the world as well as conduct themselves in life (Nabi & Riddle, 2008)

The social media's ability to stabilize and homogenize societal views is an example of cultivation theory. Youths who spend time on various social media platforms, Instagram, Facebook, WeChat, WhatsApp, etc. have notably more stereotypical views of the society than youths who are not active social media users. Of particular interest to this research is the possible impact of exposure to political participation by users of social media skits.

Cultivation Theory in social media suggests that prolonged engagement with social media skits can shape users' perceptions of reality, like the effects of long-term television viewing. Users' views on societal norms, values, and expectations may be influenced by the most recurrent themes and portrayals on social media, potentially leading to distorted perceptions of reality or an altered sense of social norms and behaviors.

### 3. Social Media Skit

Social media skits, through platforms like TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube, have emerged as influential tools in shaping political engagement, particularly among the youth demographic in Nigeria (Olumuji & Ogba, 2018; Ekharefo & Umoro, 2020). These skits, characterised by their humorous and relatable content, have effectively bridged the gap between political figures and the younger generation.

By leveraging social media skits, political candidates have been able to connect with young voters on a more personal level, presenting themselves as approachable and relatable individuals rather than distant figures. This humanization of politicians has fostered a sense of familiarity and trust among voters, ultimately garnering their attention, engagement, and support.

Moreover, social media skits have proven to be effective vehicles for delivering key campaign messages in a concise and entertaining manner. Skit creators adeptly weave party policies, promises, and visions into humorous narratives, ensuring better recall and leaving a lasting impression on viewers.

One of the significant advantages of social media sites is their potential for viral reach and organic growth (Tsandzana, 2023). When a skit resonates with viewers, they are inclined to share it with their social networks, exponentially expanding its reach and generating buzz around the candidate.

The emergence of the social media skit industry in Nigeria reflects the evolving landscape of digital entertainment and its influence on cultural, economic, and political spheres. Skit-makers, such as Mr. Macaroni, Taoma, and others, have become symbols of power and influence, capitalising on the popularity of their content to engage audiences and shape perceptions.

To maintain relevance and enhance visibility, skit-makers regularly upload new content, leveraging social media algorithms to increase their reach and engagement. This form of platform labour underscores the dynamic nature of the social media skit industry and its role in shaping entertainment experiences in the digital age.

In addition to their entertainment value, social media skits have become a platform for social commentary and advocacy, with celebrities often participating in skits to endorse causes and promote prosocial messages. This trend further amplifies the impact of social media skits on cultural and political discourse.

Overall, the rise of social media has transformed the landscape of political communication (Tsandzana, 2023) and entertainment in Nigeria, highlighting the growing influence of digital platforms in shaping societal norms and behaviors (Ajodo-Adebanjko, 2018). Through humour and relatability, social media skits have emerged as powerful tools for engaging audiences, influencing perceptions, and driving social change.

#### **4. Intersection of Social Media and Politics in Nigeria**

In the wake of the social media era, politicians in Nigeria have embraced these platforms as crucial tools for gauging their political relevance, connecting with supporters, and advancing their political agendas (Ajodo-Adebanjko, 2018; Mamman, 2019). The utilisation of social media, especially during elections, has become pervasive among Nigerian politicians. Platforms such as Facebook serve as arenas for politicians to articulate their positions, address issues, and update the public on their administration's progress.

Politicians extensively use Facebook for detailed communication, while Instagram becomes a visual showcase of campaign rallies in various regions, carefully curated to emphasise positive reception (Tsandzana, 2023). Notably, WhatsApp is employed for direct communication within campaign teams, maintaining a level of exclusivity. Twitter, on the other hand, serves as a space for concise public statements and direct interactions with voters. However, it is essential to acknowledge that some social media channels are also conduits for spreading misinformation and hate speech in Nigeria (Ekharefo & Umoro, 2020; Okunbor, 2022).

The widespread adoption of social media has catalysed the democratisation and political development processes in Nigeria, revolutionising communication beyond traditional constraints. Social media platforms like Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, Instagram, and others have become integral to various aspects of people's lives, influencing social, political, and economic activities.

Social media's interactive nature makes it a versatile tool for purposes ranging from socialisation and education to governance and political participation (Tsandzana, 2023). It serves as a conduit for information dissemination, fostering relationships, and connecting people across geographical boundaries (Olumuji, Asemah & Edegoh, 2013). Noteworthy social media applications include Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube, contributing to the creation of a thriving social media skit industry (Ajodo-Adebanjko, 2018; Ekharefo & Umoro, 2020).

In the political landscape, social media offers politicians innovative ways to govern by facilitating online opinion polling, informal interaction with the public, and gauging the political atmosphere before campaigns. This direct connection aids politicians in presenting themselves as approachable and in touch with the needs of the citizens.

However, the use of social media for political participation is not without challenges. Issues such as misinformation, political harassment, rumours, fake news, propaganda, and trolling have emerged as drawbacks (Ekharefo & Umoro, 2020). The echo-chamber effect, where users are exposed to content that aligns with their viewpoints, exacerbates polarisation, limiting genuine political discourse. Additionally, social media's susceptibility to foreign interference in elections poses a significant concern.

Despite these challenges, the benefits associated with social media have led political leaders worldwide to

adopt the platform for campaigning, voter solicitation, and maintaining transparency with citizens. In the 2023 Nigerian presidential elections, social media played a historic role in facilitating political communication and participation, even influencing the collation of election results in various states.

**5. Methodology**

This study used a descriptive survey research approach to investigate use of social media skits in encouraging youth participation in politics. The population of the study consists of youths who are active on social media in any platform residing in Lagos State of Nigeria. They were chosen to represent the Nigerian youths because most of them fall within the definition of youths who are on different social media platforms adopted for this study. In addition to this, most of them are literate, prolific users of social media and are also politically active. The population of youths in Lagos who are active on social media is estimated at 18,702,394. The sample size for this research was determined using the Australian calculator as provided

by the National Statistical Services (NSS) of Australia. The calculator offers a streamlined approach for determining sample sizes based on the following metrics:

**Confidence level:** 95%  
**Population:** 18,702,394  
**Confidence interval:** 0.04918

The sample size of 398 was determined.

The study used purposive sampling technique, this sampling technique helped to identify youths within the study area, who are up to the voting age and are active on social media. The researchers used an online approach for questionnaire administration by using Google Forms, a programme designed for survey administration. Google Forms enables researchers to conveniently update surveys online while immediately saving the collected data to a spreadsheet. A descriptive statistical analysis was used to analyse the data gathered through questionnaire using percentages, frequency count, and tables.

**6. Data Presentation**

The analysis of this study was based on the 340 copies of the questionnaire that were filled and considered appropriate for this work.

**Table 1:** Place of social media skits in youth knowledge of politics

Variables	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean $\bar{x}$
Social media skits help young people understand political issues	106 (31.2%)	211 (62.1%)	12 (3.5%)	11 (3.2%)	0 (0%)	4.20
Expressing political news through social media skits makes it appealing	141 (41.5%)	170 (50.0%)	10 (2.9%)	16 (4.7%)	3 (0.9%)	4.27
Social media skits effectively simplify complex political concept for a younger audience	104 (30.6%)	220 (64.7%)	5 (1.5%)	10 (2.9%)	1 (0.3%)	4.23
Social media skits offer a creative and engaging way to introduce youths to political concept	93 (30.6%)	229 (64.7%)	7 (2.1%)	11 (3.2%)	0 (0%)	4.19
Social media skits have the potential to contribute a more informed and politically active younger generation	57 (16.8%)	256 (75.8%)	13 (3.8%)	11 (3.2%)	3 (0.9%)	4.04

*Source:* Survey 2023

From Table 1 above, a substantial 93.3% (strongly agree + agree) of respondents acknowledged that social media skits contribute significantly to helping young people understand political issues, with a mean score of 4.20. The majority, 91.5% (strongly agree + agree), find that expressing political news through social media makes it appealing. The mean score of 4.27 underscores the effectiveness of this medium. Social media skits are seen as effective in simplifying complex political concepts for a younger audience, with 95.3% (strongly agree + agree) agreement and a mean score of 4.23. A noteworthy 95.3% (strongly agree + agree) believe that social media skits offer a creative and engaging

way to introduce youths to political concepts, earning a mean score of 4.19. While slightly lower, 92.6% (strongly agree + agree) recognise the potential of social media to contribute to a more informed and politically active younger generation, with a mean score of 4.04.

The data underscores the positive impact of social media skits on youth engagement, suggesting that they serve as effective tools for simplifying political content, making it appealing and engaging for the younger demographic. The high mean scores and agreement percentages across all variables indicate widespread recognition of the potential of social media to enhance political knowledge and participation among youth.

**Table 2:** Social media skits influence youth political behavior

Variables	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean $\bar{x}$
Social media skits increased youth interest in political events like campaigns, walks and rallies	57 (16.8%)	244 (71.8%)	19 (5.6%)	18 (5.3%)	2 (0.6%)	3.99
Social media skits prompted youths to research political candidates in political parties	46 (13.8%)	243 (71.5%)	37 (10.9%)	13 (3.8%)	1 (0.3%)	3.94
Social media skits prompted youths to register to vote in the election	42 (11.0%)	284 (74.3%)	33 (8.6%)	22 (5.8%)	1 (0.3%)	4.38
Social media skits inspired youths to register and belong to a political party	48 (13.3%)	250 (69.4%)	41 (11.4%)	21 (5.8%)	1 (0.3%)	3.91
Social media skits prompted youths to contest (become a candidate for political office) in the election	22 (6.5%)	172 (50.6%)	91 (26.8%)	49 (14.4%)	6 (1.8%)	3.46
Social media skits motivated youths to actively campaign for candidate(s) of their choice	46 (13.5%)	248 (72.9%)	32 (9.4%)	12 (3.5%)	2 (0.6%)	3.95
Social media skits encourage youth to vote in the elections	44 (12.9%)	264 (77.6%)	22 (6.5%)	9 (2.6%)	1 (0.3%)	4.00

*Source: Survey 2023*

From table 2, a substantial 88.6% (strongly agree + agree) believe that social media has increased youth interest in political events. The mean score of 3.99 indicates a positive impact, though opinions are not overwhelmingly strong. A significant 85.3% (strongly agree + agree) claim that social media skits prompted youths to research political candidates, indicating a positive influence with a mean score of 3.94. An impressive 85.3% (strongly agree + agree) assert that social media skits prompted youths to register to vote, with a notably high mean score of 4.38, indicating a strong positive influence on this aspect of political behavior. While still positive, this aspect has a slightly lower agreement at 82.7% (strongly agree + agree) with a mean score of 3.91, revealing that social media skits inspired youths to register and belong to a political party. This variable shows a more divided sentiment, with 57.1% (strongly agree + agree), indicating a moderate positive influence, and a mean score of 3.46 showed that social media skits prompted youths to contest the election. A significant 86.4% (strongly agree + agree) believe that social media skits motivated youths to actively campaign for candidates, with a mean score of 3.95. An overwhelming 90.5% (strongly agree + agree) agree that social media skits encourage youth to vote in elections, with a mean score of 4.00.

The data suggests a generally positive influence of social media on various aspects of youth political behaviour, including increased interest in political events, research on candidates, voter registration, and motivation to vote. The slightly lower agreement on inspiring youths to register and belong to a political party and prompting youths to contest in the election highlights potential areas for further exploration. Overall, social media skits appear to play a significant role in shaping and encouraging positive political behaviours among the youth.

**Table 3:** Drawbacks and limitations of social media skits as a means of political engagement among young people

Variables	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean $\bar{x}$
Social media skits were used to propagate false information about political parties and their candidates	36 (10.6%)	167 (49.1%)	32 (9.4%)	95 (27.9%)	10 (3.0%)	3.37
Social media skits can lead to the spread of misinformation due to lack of detailed context	42 (12.3%)	232 (68.2%)	26 (7.7%)	39 (11.5%)	1 (0.3%)	3.81
Social media skits contribute to presenting political issues in an abused manner	35 (10.2%)	204 (60.0%)	48 (14.1%)	79 (23.1%)	9 (2.6%)	3.83
Social media skits often trivialize important political issues and discussion	30 (8.8%)	194 (57.1%)	42 (12.4%)	71 (20.9%)	3 (0.9%)	3.52

*Source:* Survey 2023

From Table 3, a notable 59.7% (strongly agree + agree) express concerns that social media skits were used to propagate false information about political parties and their candidates. The mean score of 3.37 suggests a significant level of agreement on this drawback. The majority, 80.5% (strongly agree + agree), believe that social media skits can lead to the spread of misinformation due to a lack of detailed context, with a mean score of 3.81 indicating substantial agreement. Concerns are raised by 70.3% (strongly agree + agree) that social media skits contribute to presenting political issues in an abused manner. The mean score of 3.83 reflects a notable level of agreement on this limitation. A considerable 65.9% (strongly agree + agree) are concerned that social media skits often trivialise important political issues and discussions, with a mean score of 3.52.

The findings suggest that while social media skits contribute positively to youth political engagement, they also carry drawbacks and limitations. Concerns about the propagation of false information, the spread of misinformation due to a lack of detailed context, the abuse of presenting political issues, and the trivialization of important political discussions indicate the need for a critical assessment of the content shared through this medium. Addressing these concerns is crucial for harnessing the positive potential of social media for political engagement among young people.

**7. Discussion**

The survey reveals a strong consensus among respondents regarding the positive impact of social media skits on youth knowledge of politics. The majority strongly agree or agree that these skits help young people understand political issues, make political news appealing, simplify complex political concepts, offer a creative way to introduce youths to

political concepts, and have the potential to contribute to a more informed and politically active younger generation. The high mean scores across these variables (ranging from 4.04 to 4.27) indicate a widespread acknowledgment of the educational and awareness-raising potential of social media skits which affirms Ekharefo & Umoro (2020) and Tsandzana (2023) position that social media improves political communication.

The data further suggests a positive influence of social media skits on various aspects of youth political behavior. A significant proportion of respondents believe that social media skits increased youth interest in political events, prompted youths to research political candidates, encouraged voter registration, inspired youths to belong to a political party, motivated youths to actively campaign for candidates, and encouraged youth participation in elections. The high mean scores (ranging from 3.91 to 4.38) indicate a generally positive impact on these aspects of political behaviour. This finding establishes Ajodo-Adebaryko (2018) stance that polity apathy among youths can revamped if they are effectively engaged and motivated especially on social media. Furthermore, the finding on youth participation further validates the Cultivation Theory which interprets social realities in line with how they are portrayed in the media and in this case in social media skits (Anaeto, Onabajo & Osifeso, 2008).

However, the survey also highlights concerns and limitations associated with the use of social media skits for political engagement among young people. A substantial percentage of respondents express worry about the propagation of false information about political parties and candidates through social media skits. There are also concerns about the potential spread of misinformation due to a lack of detailed context, the presentation of political issues in an

abused manner, and the trivialization of important political discussions. The concern about false information affirms Ekharefo & Umoro (2020) and Okunbor (2022) positions that social media peddle false information. These findings emphasize the need for critical evaluation and responsible content creation within the realm of social media skits to ensure their positive impact.

The positive findings regarding the impact of social media skits on youth political knowledge and behavior suggest that these platforms can be powerful tools for political engagement. Politicians and campaign strategists can leverage the popularity and influence of social media skits to effectively communicate political messages, connect with the youth demographic, and inspire active political participation.

## 8. Conclusion and Recommendations

In conclusion, the survey findings underscore the dual nature of social media skits in political engagement among young people in Nigeria. While they have a positive impact on knowledge and behaviour, there are legitimate concerns about the quality and impact of the content. Striking a balance between the creative expression inherent in social media skits and the responsibility of political messaging is crucial for maximising their positive potential in shaping a politically informed and engaged youth population.

The study therefore recommends that content creators should prioritise fact-checking and accuracy in their social media posts, particularly when dealing with political topics. Providing verifiable information helps prevent the spread of false information and misinformation. Content creators should approach political subjects with sensitivity and responsibility. They should avoid sensationalising or trivialising important political discussions and instead strive to present them in a balanced and respectful manner.

In addition, youths should critically evaluate the content they consume on social media, including social media skits. They should question the accuracy and reliability of the information presented and seek out multiple sources for verification. They also need to be mindful of the content they share on social media platforms. They should avoid spreading false information or misinformation and prioritise sharing content that is accurate, reliable, and ethically produced.

The study also recommends that Political parties should develop comprehensive social media engagement strategies that leverage the popularity of

social media to connect with young voters. This includes creating engaging and shareable content that resonates with youth demographics. Political parties should prioritise transparency and authenticity in their social media communications. By being open and honest with voters, they can build trust and credibility, which is essential for effective political engagement.

Governments should consider implementing regulatory frameworks to govern social media content, including social media skits. These frameworks should balance freedom of expression with the need to prevent the spread of false information and misinformation. The government should invest in digital literacy programmes to educate citizens, particularly youths, on how to critically evaluate and responsibly engage with content on social media platforms. This includes teaching skills such as fact-checking, critical thinking, and media literacy.

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