Research Article

Influence of Artificial Intelligence (AI)-Driven Political Communication on Electorate's Voting Decision

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Abstract: The study examined the influence of A -driven political communication on electorate's voting decision in Nigeria. Artificial Intelligence has revolutionized various sectors globally, including political communication. The use of AI tools to influence public opinion, drive persuasive communication and shape political outcomes is becoming increasingly topical and intriguing. Politicians are integrating AI tools in their campaigns like never before. Three objectives were formulated for this study. Library/ desk research method was adopted as it provided a theoretical foundation for the study on the influence of AI -driven political communication on electorate's voting decision in Nigeria. The study was premised on the voting behaviour theory and Nwokeocha's PAARA model of political communication. The study concluded that the influence of artificial Ilintelligence -driven political communication on electorate's voting decision can not be over emphasized and that this influence has highlighted the transformative potential of AI in reshaping political processes and outcomes. The study recommended that voters and politicians should be educated on the potential and threats of AI especially in political communication. It also recommended AI should be integrated in political education at all levels.

Keywords: AI-driven political communication, AI, Electorate, Voting, Politics

INTRODUCTION

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has revolutionized various sectors globally, including political communication. The use of AI-driven tools and platforms to influence public opinion and shape electoral outcomes has become increasingly prevalent in recent years. According to Aker (2021), AI technologies such as chatbots, data analytics, sentiment analysis, and predictive modeling have provided politicians with sophisticated mechanisms to tailor their messages to diverse audiences. In Nigeria, where democratic practices have matured over two decades, political campaigns have evolved from traditional town hall meetings to advanced digital platforms, leveraging AI for micro-targeting and personalized communication. This development marks a significant departure from conventional approaches to political engagement.

The increasing adoption of AI in political communication is rooted in its ability to analyze vast amounts of data to understand voter preferences, attitudes, and behaviors. For instance, AI algorithms can process social media interactions to detect trends, enabling political actors to craft messages that resonate with specific demographics (Okoro & Eze, 2022). In a multicultural society like Nigeria, characterized by its ethnic and religious diversity, such targeted messaging has profound implications for electoral outcomes. AI-driven political communication has the potential to unify or polarize the electorate, depending on how it is deployed.

Moreover, AI facilitates real-time interaction between political candidates and the electorate. Chatbots, for example, are increasingly used to answer voter inquiries, clarify policy positions, and disseminate campaign promises (Obi & Adekunle, 2023). While these innovations enhance the accessibility of political information, they also raise questions about the authenticity and transparency of the communication. Misinformation and the spread of propaganda through AI-driven platforms have become significant concerns in Nigerian elections, as highlighted by Adebayo (2023).

Another critical dimension of AI-driven political communication is its influence on voter decision-making processes. Studies have shown that personalized political ads and algorithmically curated content can reinforce existing biases or sway undecided voters (Chukwuma, 2022). In Nigeria, where political loyalty often hinges on ethnic, religious, or regional affiliations, the deployment of AI tools could either amplify these divides or foster issue-based campaigns. Thus, understanding the impact of AI on voter behavior requires a nuanced examination of its applications in the Nigerian political context.

The rapid growth of digital platforms and increasing internet penetration in Nigeria have also accelerated the adoption of AI-driven political

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communication. As of 2023, over 50% of Nigerians had access to the internet, providing fertile ground for political actors to leverage AI technologies to influence public opinion (Statista, 2023). Social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp have become critical arenas for political engagement, with AI tools playing a central role in shaping the narrative. The implications of this shift are far-reaching, affecting not only voter behavior but also the overall integrity of the electoral process.

Despite its advantages, the use of AI in political communication has sparked debates about ethics, privacy, and accountability. Critics argue that the lack of regulatory frameworks in Nigeria creates opportunities for the misuse of AI technologies to manipulate public opinion and undermine democratic principles (Ekong & Musa, 2024). Furthermore, the opaque nature of AI algorithms raises concerns about their potential to perpetuate biases or exclude marginalized groups from political discourse. These challenges underscore the need for comprehensive policies to govern the use of AI in political communication.

AI-driven political communication represents a double-edged sword with the potential to enhance or undermine democratic processes. While it offers opportunities for more effective and inclusive engagement, it also poses significant risks to electoral integrity and voter autonomy. This study seeks to explore the extent to which AI-driven political communication influences voting decisions in Nigeria, shedding light on its implications for the future of democracy in the country.

Statement of the Problem

The adoption of AI-driven political communication in Nigeria's electoral landscape presents both opportunities and challenges. While AI tools offer unprecedented precision in targeting and engaging voters, they also raise ethical and practical concerns. The increasing use of AI to disseminate personalized political messages has sparked debates about the authenticity of such communication and its implications for voter autonomy. In a politically sensitive environment like Nigeria, where electoral outcomes are often influenced by ethnic, religious, and regional affiliations, the deployment of AI technologies may exacerbate existing divisions or foster issue-based campaigns. However, the extent to which AI-driven political communication shapes voter behavior remains underexplored.

Another pressing issue is the potential misuse of AI technologies to spread misinformation and propaganda during election campaigns. The lack of regulatory frameworks in Nigeria creates a vacuum that allows political actors to exploit AI for unethical purposes, including voter manipulation. For example, the use of deepfake technology and algorithmically generated fake news poses a significant threat to the credibility of elections. While digital platforms such as social media offer opportunities for greater political participation, they also amplify the risk of AI-driven manipulation, which could undermine trust in the electoral process.

Given these complexities, there is a critical need to investigate the influence of AI-driven political communication on electorate voting decisions in Nigeria. This study seeks to address the gap in existing research by examining how AI tools shape voter perceptions, behaviors, and decisions. It also aims to provide insights into the ethical and regulatory challenges associated with AI-driven political communication, offering recommendations for safeguarding electoral integrity in Nigeria.

Objectives of the study

- To investigate the role of artificial intelligence in poetical communication considering its influence on electorates voting decision and voter mobilization.
- To find out the influence of artificial intelligence-driven political communication on electorate's voting decision
- To analyze the benefits and drawbacks of AI political communication.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Understanding AI-driven political communication on electorate's voting decision in Nigeria.

Artificial intelligence is the simulation of human intelligence processes by machines, especially computer systems. The 2023 election cycle saw Nigerian voters overwhelmed with disinformation. Sponsored news blogs, and other social media accounts and mass media spread disinformation at a rate unprecedented in the country's fragile democracy. Artificial intelligence generated images and videos, as well as media posts, falsely linked candidates to terrorists groups, ethnocentric dialogues and other criminal vices in the bid to besmirch their public image and limit their political chances. This disinformation was also used to rouse ethno-nationalist and religious sentiments among the voters.

Across the major political divides emerged three candidates, who had followings of devout cult-like believers. The ruling party, the All Progressive Congress (APC), had its candidates in Bola Ahmed Tinibu and his supporters called "**BATISTS**."

The enthusiasm leading to the elections was high. According to the European Union Election observation mission Nigeria 2023, a record breaking voter registration was captured with an additional 9.3 million voters (mostly youths) bringing the total eligible voters to a record 93.4 million people. Youths in Nigeria

were excited about the 2023 presidential elections for several reasons, including the emergence of a third force and the absence of an incumbent running in the presidential race. However, this enthusiasm was short-lived as the outcome of the elections disappointed citizens. Other factors, such as late campaigns, AI-generated disinformation, and attacks on voters and election officials, further sourced the mood leading up to the election.

Nigeria is no stranger to political disinformation. According to Nwankwo (2005), since independence in 1960, Nigeria has been beset by conflicts over the attachment and control of power, which led to deadly programs such as the action group crisis of 1962-63, the western region election crisis of 1965, the military coup of 1966, the Igbo massacre in northern Nigeria between May and October 1966, the 1967-1970 civil war, and a stew of inter-ethnic wars and riots. In fact, propaganda has remained a mainstay of Nigeria's electioneering process with caricatures and disparaging information about opponents created and published in newspapers, magazines, calendars, and posters.

The north leading up to the 2023 election cycle saw a great deal of media campaigning for and against candidates, especially concerning the presidential election journalist Eric Davies commented that AI generated deep fakes used in media campaigns were not subtle. He argued that the supporters of the labour party candidates used AI-generated images and videos to enhance the public perception of their candidates, Peter Obi, in various instances including deep fake videos depicting Nollywood actors, and even American celebrities like Elon Musk and Donald Trump, endorsing Obi for the presidency.

Similarly, deep fakes were also used to undermine public opinions of candidates such as the video depicting PDP candidates Atiku Abubakar and his supporters planning to rig the election there was also the video debuked by reuters, which showed APC candidates Bola Tinibu incoherently responding to questions at the Chatham house leading up to the elections.

AI-generated images and videos often appear very real, and it would take great discernment to identify them as fake. This has enormous implications for Nigeria's democracy and nation building political scholar Gideon Isika (2021) commented that Nigerian voters were not as politically educated as their counterparts in south Africa and Ghana, for example and even when they were too polarized by religious and ethnic sentiments to admit certain truths.

Isika also argued that most Nigerian had no access to fact-checking applications or websites, making it difficult for an organic pursuit of political truth. This in turn left citizens at the mercy of the media to which they were the party leaders.

During the 2023 elections, independent analytics like Humanngle analyzed thousands of media posts on twitter finding a pattern of inorganic hash tags and information being spread social media influencers and bot accounts in an efforts to undermine competitors and take advantage of voter sentiment.

Historical Overview of AI-Driven Political Communication

The COVID-19 pandemic brought the realization of how crucial technology has become in our world today. Importantly, AI has been dominating conversations in every sphere, becoming the focus of tech companies globally.

The surge in interest in AI, can be traced to advances in computing power and the availability to large datasets. AI is now being used to solve some of the world's most challenging problems, such as developing new drugs, diagnosing diseases and creating self-driving cars. Industries have recognized the transformative power of AI leading to its expansion and massive development.

In Nigeria, AI was primarily an emerging field with limited applications. However, with the rise of global AI Nigeria began to witness a shift in mindset. Entrepreneurs, researchers, and policy makers started exploring the possibilities AI could offer in addressing local needs and driving economic growth.

One of the key drivers behind the evolution of AI in Nigeria has been the concerted efforts of government and educational institutions. Recognizing the importance of AI formation development, the Nigerian government has taken steps to foster innovation and create an enabling environment for AI research and development.

The idea of inanimate objects coming to life as intelligent beings (Artificial intelligence) has been around for a long time. It began in antique with myths, stories and rumors of artificial beings endowed with intelligence or consciousness by master craftman.

The beginning of modern AI can be traced to classical philosophers attempt to describe human thinking as a symbolic system. But the field of AI was not formally founded until 1956, when John McCarthy at an academic conference at Dartmouth College in Hanover, New Hampshire where the term Artificial Intelligence was coined (McGuire, 2006).

Investment and interest in AI boomed in the first decades of the 21st century, when machine learning was successfully applied to many problems in academia,

industry and during elections due to the presence of powerful computer hardware.

Influence of AI-Driven communication on electorate's voting decisions in Nigeria: An exploration

In the context of contemporary political communication, the growing intersection of digital technology and politics has sparked increasing interest among social science scholars (De Blassio, 2018; Ziccardi, 2019). This convergence phenomenom (Jenkins, 2014) has given rise to new interaction dynamics among political actors, media and citizens, fundamentally reshaping how politics is conceived, disseminated and consumed. Notably the advent of AI represents one of the most significant milestones in this evolution (Flondi, 2022). It is no secret that with its ability to analyze complex data, process real time information and adapt to individual preferences. AI redefines how political leaders engage with electorate and substantially contributes to shaping their voting decisions (Crawford, 2022).

When analyzing the interaction between AI and politics, the need for a thoughtful and informative reflection emerges, encompassing both the ethical and social challenges associated with this convergence and the potential innovation opportunities. This perspective underscores the relevance of conducting a balance and indebt assessment to enrich the understanding of his dynamic in all its nuances.

The emergence of the digital era has revolutionized political communication in Nigeria, introducing new opportunities and challenges (Odubote, 2014). The evolution of political communication in the digital era encompasses different tools of Artificial intelligence. These tools offer politicians and citizens an interactive space to engage in political discussions, share information, and mobilize support. According to Nigerian communication commission (NCC) report as of 2021 Nigeria had over 100 million internet users with a significant portion engaging in AI activities (NCC 2023). The increasing use of Artificial intelligence for political communication has had a profound impact on election campaigns and citizens engagement; online political campaigns, candidates now utilize websites, chat GPT, and social media accounts to disseminate campaign messages and interact with voters.

The influence of Artificial intelligence driven political communication on electorate's voting decisions in Nigeria can be seen in the 2023 general elections, where artificial intelligence played a vital role on voter's decision in Nigeria (Oso & Olayiwola, 2020). This election witnesses online political engagement with candidates leveraging AI tools to reach a broader audience, citizen journalism and online activism, AI tools have empowered citizens to become journalist and online activities use AI tools to raise awareness, share news and voice their opinions.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The following theory was relevant to this study:

Voting Behavior Theory:

Voting behavior theory states that the decision making process of individuals when choosing a political party or candidate to vote for, it takes into account various factors such as cognitive considerations, personal traits, political issues, ideology and past performance. People's voting behavior is influenced by limited attention, simplification strategies, and the perceived relevance of information at a given moment.

Since the pioneer work by Campbell et al on party identification, that is on voting as the stable result of an identification process that dates back to developmental age and to family influences, several other explanations have been proposed.

This theory was propounded by Lazarsfled, who studied voting behavior empirically with survey data in 1944, based on individual data.

In this contest, voting behavior is being influenced by AI because of its potential spread of disinformation. AI generated deep fakes-highly realistic but fake audio, video and images are used to mislead voters and undermine trust in the electoral process.

This theory is relevant to this study because AI can be used to teach voters the fundamentals of democracy, whether it is by learning about a policy problem or becoming acquainted with a politician's position. AI can prove useful to voter's behavior when proper safeguards are applied and strategies are formulated to mitigate its negative influence on electorate's voting decision.

METHODOLOGY

The library/desk research method was adopted for the study. The method is essential in providing the theoretical foundation and context for the study on the influence of AI-driven political communication on electorate's voting decisions in Nigeria. This method involves gathering and analyzing secondary data from a variety of credible sources to support the research objectives.

DISCUSSION

The findings of the study are discussed inline with the objectives of the study.

Objective 1:

The Roles of Artificial Intelligence in Political Communication Considering its Influence on Electorate's Voting Decisions and Voter Mobilization

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has significantly transformed political communication by optimizing voter engagement strategies. AI tools, such as machine learning algorithms, predictive analytics, and natural language processing, enable political campaigners to tailor messages to specific audience segments, enhancing their effectiveness. These tools analyze voter behavior, preferences, and concerns to create personalized political communication that resonates with individual voters (Chesney & Citron, 2019).

AI also facilitates voter mobilization by leveraging data from social media platforms, online surveys, and voter registration databases to identify potential supporters and persuade undecided voters (Bennett & Segerberg, 2013). Chatbots, for instance, have been deployed in political campaigns to answer voter queries, provide information on candidates, and even encourage participation in elections (Rojas, 2021). According to Tufekci (2014), such technological advancements streamline outreach efforts, thereby improving voter turnout.

However, while AI fosters greater political participation, concerns about the ethical implications of microtargeting and privacy infringement have been raised. Researchers like Susser, Roessler, and Nissenbaum (2019) argue that AI's use in voter mobilization can sometimes lead to manipulation or the spread of misinformation.

Objective 2

The Influence of AI-Driven Political Communication on Electorate's Voting Decisions

AI-driven political communication has a profound impact on the electorate's voting decisions by shaping public opinion and influencing political discourse. Through sentiment analysis and data-driven insights, political campaigns can craft messages that align with voters' emotions and perceptions, thus swaying their decisions (Bradshaw & Howard, 2018). For example, AI-powered platforms like Cambridge Analytica demonstrated how psychological profiling could be used to target voters with precision (Cadwalladr, 2018).

AI also amplifies political communication through social media platforms. Recommendation algorithms promote politically aligned content, creating echo chambers that reinforce existing beliefs and attitudes (Sunstein, 2017). While this enhances voter loyalty, it risks polarizing the electorate and diminishing exposure to diverse perspectives.

Moreover, scholars like Allcott and Gentzkow (2017) warn about the potential of AI to disseminate fake news, which may distort voters' understanding of political issues and influence their choices. Despite these challenges, the role of AI in refining political messaging cannot be understated, as it empowers political actors to engage with voters more strategically.

Objective 3

The Benefits and Drawbacks of AI in Political Communication

The use of AI in political communication presents numerous benefits and drawbacks, as noted by scholars in the field. One major benefit is the ability to streamline and personalize communication. AI enables campaigns to tailor content for specific demographics, thereby increasing message relevance and impact (Bimber, 2014). Additionally, AI automates repetitive tasks, such as data analysis and message dissemination, freeing up resources for strategic planning (Brynjolfsson & McAfee, 2017).

However, the drawbacks of AI in political communication are equally significant. Privacy concerns arise from the use of personal data for microtargeting, as highlighted by Zuboff (2019). Moreover, the reliance on AI-driven systems has raised concerns about the spread of misinformation and the erosion of trust in political processes. As Bradshaw and Howard (2019) emphasize, the automation of content production can facilitate the creation of fake news and propaganda, undermining democratic institutions.

AI also risks deepening inequalities in political communication. Wealthier candidates and parties can afford advanced AI tools, thereby gaining an unfair advantage over their competitors (Howard, 2020). This disparity raises questions about the ethical use of technology in political campaigns.

CONCLUSION

The influence of AI-driven political communication on electorate's voting decisions in Nigeria has highlighted the transformative potential of artificial intelligence in reshaping political processes. AI enables personalized and data-driven political messaging, enhancing voter engagement and mobilization. It allows political actors to analyze voter behavior, preferences, and concerns with precision, thereby crafting targeted campaigns that resonate with the electorate. However, this technological advancement comes with significant ethical concerns, including voter manipulation, data privacy breaches, and the dissemination of misinformation. While AI has proven beneficial in streamlining communication and improving voter participation, it also risks deepening political inequalities and polarizing the electorate if not ethically regulated. As Nigeria continues to adopt AI in its democratic processes, striking a balance between

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innovation and accountability will be critical to ensuring fair and credible elections.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the discussion of findings, here are some recommendations:

1. The Nigerian government should establish a regulatory framework to govern the use of AI-driven communication tools in political campaigns. This framework should ensure transparency, accountability, and fairness in the use of AI-driven communication.
2. INEC and civil society organizations should implement voter education programs that focus on critical thinking, media literacy, and the responsible use of AI. This will empower voters to make informed decisions and critically evaluate AI-driven political communication.
3. Political parties and candidates should disclose their use of AI-driven communication tools and algorithms. This transparency will help build trust with voters and promote accountability in the use of AI-driven communication.
4. Social media platforms and fact-checking organizations should collaborate to establish fact-checking mechanisms to counter misinformation and disinformation spread through AI-driven communication.
5. The Nigerian government, academia, and civil society organizations should collaborate to conduct continuous research and monitoring on the impact of AI-driven political communication on voting decisions. This will help identify emerging trends, challenges, and opportunities, informing evidence-based policies and interventions

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