



TECHNOLOGY AND ELECTION COVERAGE: A STUDY ON SELECTED PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study focuses on the ‘mirror model’ role of Information Communication Technology (ICT) in election coverage with specific reference to press coverage of selected presidential elections in Nigeria. The study notes that the mass media are indispensable tools in the political process as a result of the fact that their involvement in election coverage enables the citizenry to have timely information about pre-election campaign and related activities, the election as well as post-election political developments. While noting that timely information is necessary at every stage of the political process, the study noted that the ability of the press to offer such information is hamstrung by the non-availability of the state-of-the-art technology necessary for prompt dissemination, especially, on the part of the electoral umpire. Using the historical method and Key Informant Interview as well as cybernetics theory, the study found out that the delay in prompt release of the final results of presidential elections in Nigeria was due to non-application of the state-of-the-art technology and consequently recommended upgrading of all equipment used by the electoral umpire in the conduct of future elections in the country.

Keywords

Technology; election coverage; presidential elections; Nigeria; press; key informant interview; mass media



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ТЕХНОЛОГИИ И ОСВЕЩЕНИЕ ВЫБОРОВ: ИССЛЕДОВАНИЕ ПО ОТДЕЛЬНЫМ ПРЕЗИДЕНТСКИМ ВЫБОРАМ В НИГЕРИИ

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Аннотация

Основное внимание в данном исследовании уделяется «зеркальной модели» роли информационно-коммуникационных технологий (ИКТ) в освещении выборов с особым упором на освещение в прессе отдельных президентских выборов в Нигерии. В исследовании отмечается, что средства массовой информации являются незаменимыми инструментами политического процесса в силу того, что их участие в освещении выборов позволяет гражданам своевременно получать информацию о предвыборной кампании и связанной с ней деятельности, выборах, а также о политических событиях после выборов. Отмечая, что своевременное информирование необходимо на каждом этапе политического процесса, исследование выявило, что возможности прессы предоставлять такую информацию ограничены из-за отсутствия современных технологий, необходимых для быстрого ее распространения, особенно со стороны избирательной комиссии. Используя исторический метод и интервью с ключевыми респондентами, а также теорию кибернетики, исследование выявило, что задержка с обнародованием окончательных результатов президентских выборов в Нигерии вызвана неприменением новейших технологий и поэтому рекомендовало модернизацию всего оборудования, используемого избирательными комиссиями при проведении будущих выборов в этой стране.

Ключевые слова

Технологии; освещение выборов; президентские выборы; Нигерия; пресса; интервью с ключевыми респондентами; СМИ



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INTRODUCTION

This study focuses on the Graber (2010, p. 19) ‘mirror model’ role of technology in the coverage of the first, fourth and eight presidential elections in the post-independent Nigeria. Thus far, presidential elections had taken place in Nigeria in the following years: 1979, 1983, 1999, 2003, 2007, 2011, 2015 and 2019. Although prior to 1979, the first post-independent elections had taken place in 1964. That was a period when Nigeria operated the British parliamentary system of government. Following the collapse of Nigeria’s First Republic on January 15, 1966, the parliamentary system of government collapsed with it. Thirteen years later when the military restored democratic governance, it was under a new presidential system of government.

The 1979 presidential election which took place on August 11 was therefore the first presidential election in the post-independent Nigeria. The final results of the elections were released on Thursday, August 16, six days after it was held. Twenty years later, the 1999 presidential election took place, specifically on February 27 while its outcome was released on March 1st, four days after it was conducted. The 2015 presidential election on the other hand took place on March 28, its outcome were released after three days. The 2019 presidential election similarly took place on February 23. The results was released on Feb 27, four days after it was conducted. While the delay lasted after the conduct of these elections, uneasy political tension griped the entire country with rumours and speculations spreading like wild fire. This study is therefore curious about the circumstances responsible for such unhealthy delay. While the 1979 elections were conducted by the Federal Electoral Commission (FEDECO), 1999, 2015 and 2019 elections were conducted by Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC).

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Extracting timely information by members of the press has been a major problem confronting media professionals in Nigeria during elections.

While local and foreign media representatives usually throng the federal and state offices of electoral umpire for information about who wins, the electoral body in turn has not been able to respond to the yearnings and aspirations of the media professionals due to the fact that necessary ICT facilities that would have aided collation and promote prompt release of election results were not available.

Whereas, societal expectation from the media is that of prompt dissemination of election outcome once an election had taken place. The



Punch newspaper edition of July 10, 1979 through a front page editorial captured the perplexing situation thus: “it is now three days since the senatorial elections were held and Federal Electoral Commission (FEDECO) has been able to announce barely half of the results. We dare say that delay in counting and announcing results open the whole exercise to abuse”.

In a related development, the newspaper in her lead story of August 13, 1979 says “the results of the governorship elections in Borno and Gongola states were not released until more than nine days after the elections were held”. The newspaper attributed the delay in the release of the final results of the presidential election to communication problem being encountered by FEDECO officials in parts of the northern states. To rescue the electoral umpire from the mess, Nigerian Airforce planes were dispatched to those areas to help the situation by collecting ballot boxes from remote areas to collating centres. This trend as would be observed later in this study only changed a little in recent times when technology was introduced to critical aspects of election administration in the country.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

This study aims at advocating full application of technology to every phase of election administration in Nigeria in order that the citizenry could have timely information. The specific objectives of the study therefore are:

1. To ascertain role, if any, played by ICT in FEDECO/INEC operations during the 1979, 1999 and 2015 presidential elections.
2. To assess the use of ICT in print media operations, especially in the area of editing of political news/pictures of the various political gladiators during the 1979, 1999 and 2015 presidential elections.
3. To ascertain the ICT facilities available at the disposal of the defunct FEDECO and INEC for the gathering, collating and dissemination of election results during the 1979, 1999 and 2015 presidential elections.
4. To examine the ICT facilities used by the Nigerian print media in the coverage of the 1979, 1999 and 2015 presidential elections.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What role does ICT play in the late release of the results of the 1979, 1999 and 2015 presidential elections?
2. What role did ICT play in print media operations, especially in the area of editing of political news/pictures used by the Nigerian press during the 1979, 1999 and 2015 presidential elections?



3. What are the ICT facilities available at the disposal of FEDECO and INEC for the gathering, collating and dissemination of election results during the 1979, 1999 and 2015 presidential elections?

4. What are the ICT facilities used by the Nigerian print media in the coverage and reportage of the 1979, 1999 and 2015 presidential elections?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Information Communication Technology (ICT) has attracted commentaries from several academics in recent times. According to Evans (1990) cited in Akinboye & Popoola (2010, p. 45), "while some abbreviate it as IT, others would rather prefer to call it Info Tech". In the words of Muchie & Baskaran (2006, p. 26) "ICT has become one of the main driving forces of globalization... like the first machine-driven industrial revolution, the ICT revolution has generated fundamental changes in the socio-economic life of people and nations across the world".

Muchie & Baskaran (2006, p. 26) further argued that ICT is unique mainly in two aspects. First, they contended that "it affects almost every country on the face of the earth and almost every aspect of life". Second, they pointed out that "unlike other technologies, ICT as an enabler has significant potential to build both social and technological capabilities in developing countries.

Burton (2010, p. 37), quoting McQuail (2000) however identified four main characteristics of ICT. They are: Interpersonal communication media such as e-mail, Interactive media play i.e. computer games, Information search media, such as Net search engines and Participatory media, such as Net rooms.

Of the above four characteristics, the most strategic and indispensable in the quest for an efficient and prompt release of election results in Nigeria is that of interpersonal media. The electoral body needs it to communicate within and outside the organization. During the 1979 and 1999 elections, when the need arose to invite political reporters to FEDECO or INEC functions, press invitations were distributed manually. It takes almost a day for such invitation to be distributed among the media houses that were located at various odd axis in the state, or country. The trend changed a little during the 2015 elections. Whereas, through the internet, all the media establishments could be reached within five minutes. Therefore, with ICT, you gain speed, you incur less bill, you eliminate risk of accident or auto crash and above all, you reduce stress drastically.

Therefore, talking about a technological device which could create, store, and distribute election information, the ICT tool that readily comes to mind is indisputably the computer. In the words of Mohammed (1990, p.



9), "computer is the most pervasive of all the new communication technologies". Besides satellite, he stresses that "it is about the only device that has a hand in all the pies of communication: print, radio, television, telephone, fibre optic, film, photography, cinema, etc." Within the ICT department of Lagos State INEC, the talk every time during the 2015 elections is about information super highway or broad band network, communicating through electronic mail or sending election results from local INEC offices to the head office or posting election results on INEC website. All these would not have been possible without computers.

However, scholars disagreed on the exact time when the computer started. Parker, cited in Pool (1983, p. 620) traced its origin to 3,500 BC when it was used as a simple adding machine. Pelton (1981, p. 25) while contributing says the "oldest one that springs to mind is a Babylonian computer that dates from 1921 BC." Yet, Hofbaver (1990, p. 22) asserts that "the history of computers can be traced roughly from the year 1812, when the English Mathematician, Charles Babbage designed what he called a different machine which could automatically work out trigonometric and logarithmic function".

The role of the media at a period of election has been object of 'serious-attention by communication scholars. Semetko (1996, p. 269) says at such period, people use the media for strategic purposes. Both the candidates and the electorates are involved in strategic use of the news media. According to him,

For the vast majority of people living in democratic societies, election campaigns are experienced through the media. Politicians gear their daily campaign activities to meet the constraints and deadlines of the news. They know that far more people turn to print or broadcast sources for information than turn out for political rallies in the town square.

While this assertion is true to some extent, the fact remains that most political parties in Nigeria hardly structure their campaign activities in a way that would meet the deadline of media establishments covering the campaign. That is why you find them at campaign venues by 6pm, still campaigning. The implication is that most print audience read their stories two days after the event. However, if a political party is buoyant enough, live coverage of the campaign by radio and television stations may help in getting the stories across fresh and unedited.

Articulating the basic role of the media in a democracy, Odunewu (2000, p. 7) says the role of the press in a democracy "is to nurture the



government of the people by the people" adding that in this context, "the press is the very oxygen of democracy".

Gana (2000, p. 11) on his part says the media in a democracy should aspire to carry out five core functions. He argued that the media have vital role to play in promoting the culture of peace, promoting development, promoting people's participation, promoting positive virtues as well as promoting a stable polity as necessary imperatives for the sustenance of democracy.

Justice Sawant (2000, p. 25) on his part says the press is the only institution which can keep people as well as those in authority informed on all matters and at all times of the day adding that:

It is the media which enables the people to perform their three-fold functions in democracy - to participate in the day-to-day affairs of the society, to take informed decision, and to keep a check on the authorities who rule on their behalf

For these reasons, Justice Sawant (2000, p. 32) described the press as the life-line of democracy as well as the 'ears' and 'eyes' of the people.

The press is a powerful institution in a democracy. There is no subject on which it cannot comment and there is no institution which can escape its criticism. The media helps to preserve and promote democracy by safeguarding the independence of its institutions including' of itself and ensuring accountability of them all.

A former American statesman, Abraham Lincoln understood the centrality and critical role of the media in democracy. Edwards (1996, p. 192) quoted Lincoln as saying "with public sentiment, nothing can fail, without it, nothing can succeed. Consequently, he who moulds public sentiment goes deeper than he who enacts statutes or pronounces decisions".

Akinfeleye (2011, p. 12-13) similarly quoted a renowned American philosopher, a democrat and president, Thomas Jefferson who declared poignantly that if he were to choose between having a government without a newspaper, he would not hesitate to choose the latter. It is therefore saying the obvious in the context of North (1967, p. 301) once more that politics cannot exist without communicating through the press.

In related development, Edwards (1996, p. 10) argued that the press performs a dual role in every democratic society; first, he contends that "the



press occupied a position that is analogous to that of a middleman providing necessary information about the affairs of the state and politics".

He states further that as watchdog, it carries out investigation into activities of public officials and exposes scandals. He was however quick to add that the founders of the US, especially, former American statesmen such as Washington, Jefferson and Madison never anticipated a scenario in which the watchdog role of the press would turn into an attack by engaging in what a US political scholar, Larry Sabato calls "a feeding frenzy". That is, a situation where a critical mass of journalists pursue the same story intensely, excessively and sometimes uncontrollably. Said he: "They did not foresee that journalists would seize the center stage in the political process, creating, not reporting, the news and altering the shape of politics and the contours of government". A similar scenario was witnessed in Nigeria after the 1979 presidential elections concerning the 12 2/3rd saga. Till date, many Nigerians believed ex-president Sheu Shagari stole the presidency in active collaboration with the military as a result of the ways the press portrayed the matter.

However, a major reason why the press wielded such an enormous power was given by Helge through a piece entitled "Democracy, civil society and the media in Africa in the nineties". According to Helge (1995, p. 335), the media are at the centre of the democratic process and their situation can be used as a barometer for explaining the depth of political change. His words: "citizens participation through the media is indispensable in order to carry out coherently the economic and cultural development of society".

In the last decade, the electioneering process across the world has been experiencing a dramatic change and this change is largely being induced by the amazing impact of ICT on reporting. Edwards (1996, p. 33) vividly captured the global impact of ICT on reporting when he says "the leader of every nation, north and south, rich and poor, democratic and authoritarian, acknowledges the awesome power of the media, especially electronic media to shape the politics of his nation".

Edwards (1996, p. 33) further presented the views of the foremost European leaders, Lech Walesa and Jiang Zemin when confronted with a similar question. While Lech Walesa, a Polish leader says "would there be Earth without the Sun? Jiang Zemin, the General Secretary of the Chinese Communist Party says "the power of the media is so enormous that chaos could result if the tools of public opinion are not tightly controlled in the hands of true Marxists". Edwards similarly quoted a Chilean opposition that upset Augusto. Pinochet in a Plebiscite saying "in 15 minutes



television time, we destroyed 15 years of government publicity for the dictators".

The reality of global politics today is that the arrival of ICT has brought remarkable changes to politics. Edwards (1996, p. 188) further contended that the greatest impact of ICT on political reporting has been greatest on the office of the president. While noting that John F. Kennedy was the first TV President in 1960, he added that Ross Perot was the first talk-show presidential candidate in 1992. It could be recalled that both used television to talk directly to the voters without being filtered or mediated through journalistic editorial process.

Back home in Nigeria, several newspapers and magazines wrote after the first presidential television debate between late Basorun MKO Abiola of the defunct Social Democratic Party (SDP) and Alhaji Bashir Othman Tofa of the defunct National Republican Convention (NRC) that the SDP candidate was a better material for the office of president.

Some political pundits were also of the view that the results of the 1979 presidential election won by Alhaji Sheu Shagari of the National Party of Nigeria (NPN) would have been different if there was a live presidential election debate featuring all the five presidential candidates who contested the election, namely, Alhaji Sheu Shagari, Chief Obafemi Awolowo, Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, Malam Aminu Kano and Alhaji Waziri Ibrahim.

Up to Nigeria's Second Republic politics (1979-1983), party candidates used to be picked behind closed doors by party bosses or through a consensus arrangement. Through media insistence, the political parties now embrace primaries that is covered live by television to decide the party's flag bearers. Such insistence is in line with the primary obligation of the mass media in any Political community with regard to feeding the citizenry with information about occurrences in their environment. Whitney (1975, p. 69), while re-echoing the three major activities of the mass media narrowed down this function to "Surveillance of the environment, Correlation of parts of society in responding to the environment and Transmission of the social heritage from one generation to next".

Surveillance has to do with the primary responsibility of the media with regard to combing the environment for useful information that would make life meaningful for the people.

Correlation, on the other hand, involves interpretation of information collected from the environment. When editorial, news analysis or commentaries are published; government may be forced to take some positive action to redress the perceived problems. Transmission of social



heritage from generation to generation is the socializing function of the media through conscious education and enlightenment. The 'mirror model' role of the press advocated by Graber (2010, p. 19-20) contend that news should be a reflection of reality in the society. The model further states that "news people impartially report all significant happenings that come their way". During elections, as would be seen later in this study, ICT becomes an enabler by enabling the various media in Nigeria to carry political stories that reflected the true reality of happenings in the political terrain at the right time.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is anchored on the communication theory otherwise known as cybernetics. According to Gauba (2003, p. 98), the theory represents another model of political analysis derived from the concept of political system.

According to Gauba, the chief exponent of the theory is Karl Deutsch who sought to use the approach in analyzing the political system. Quoting Norbert Wiener, cybernetics major developer, Isaak (1981, p. 293) says "it is the study of communication and control in all types of organizations, from machines to large-scale organization".

Deutsch, a leading proponent of the theory was said to be less concerned with the bones or muscles of the body - politic than with its nerves - its channels of communications and decisions. Deutsch, according to Gauba further argued that "it might be profitable to look upon government somewhat less as a problem of power and somewhat more as a problem of steering i.e directing the course of its activity which is the main function of communication".

Conducting election in any democratic society is a task requiring specific and decisive steering. First, there must be communication between the electoral umpire and the political parties. The electoral commission must put in place a mechanism for transmitting messages and obtaining reactions or feedback. The input and output communication mechanism must take cognizance of environmental stress, distortion, gain and feedback.

Isaak (1981, p. 294-295) provides insight to each of these core communication concepts, in relation to the conduct of elections in a democratic polity. He contends that every institution, including electoral body exists within an environment. This environment places stress on the system. This stress is otherwise called 'load'. Load is a burden. If a load on the system increases without deliberate efforts to reduce or manage it, it would then be difficult for the system to adjust and meet aspirations of the



people in the environment. If load is poorly managed, there would be 'lag' in the system. Therefore, lag is a fallout or an off-shoot of load. It refers to the time between the reception of information and the reaction or reply to it. Thus, the greater the lag, the less efficient the system. A system must be able to maintain itself. Ability to promptly respond to information or demand accurately enhances the efficiency of a system. Once lag sets in, rumour and gossip will take over. In the context of Blake and Haroldsen (1975, p. 30) "rumour is a widespread report from an unknown source". Quoting--Shibutani (1966), they contend further that "it develops as men caught together in an ambiguous situation attempt to construct a meaningful interpretation of the situation by pooling their intellectual resources". They further described gossip as unverified news that is transmitted through the interpersonal channels. A recurring problem in post-independent elections in Nigeria is the problem of distortion.

Distortion is the changes that take place in information between the time it is received and the time it is reacted to. While Anifowose (1982, p. 220) refers to this as "switching of results", Ologbenla (2003, p. 91) says "it is electoral malpractices", while Onuoha (2003, p. 59) described it as "winning at all cost".

Gain therefore is a product of learning. Part of the reasons why the 1983 general elections were riddled with crises was due to the fact that FEDECO did not learn from mistakes of the past, especially, from the 1979 elections. Maitambari (2011, p. 71) while buttressing this fact says for instance, rather than FEDECO adhering to the 1979 election time-table, FEDECO exposed itself to allegations of bias and manipulation by scheduling the presidential election to hold first which all the parties except the NPN opposed."The opposition alleged that the sequencing of the election was to produce a bandwagon effect to the benefit of the NPN. The ruling party, NPN ignored feedback from the opposition parties. Whereas, when treatment or attention is given to every load which a system receives, such is bound to strengthen the system as it would produce positive feedback. Whenever in-coming load to the system is handled in the right manner, the system would then be in a position to predict future states of the environment. This is called load. This is the whole essence of cybernetics, to transfer information through communication. In other words, information is what flows through the channels of communication. When received, it is analyzed and reacted to. In the course of receiving and reacting to load, there are lessons to be learnt. Adjustment will come in a manner analogous to an anti-aircraft gun correcting or adjusting its goal to the speed and flight pattern of its target. The overall result of the changes and adjustment is that the system would be in top shape to predict future



state of the environment. In this manner, the system could anticipate certain developments and therefore make adequate provisions in advance to address it.

METHODOLOGY

To enrich the historical method of analysis as well as Key Informant Interview Method used in this study whose population consists of 57 print media establishments identified by Akinfeleye (2003, p. 47-57) and Komolafe (2004, p. 107-112), 10 members of staff in the ICT department of Lagos State INEC, 29 ICT members of staff of Abuja INEC, and three senior journalists who were purposively chosen from the professional body was used. The three senior journalists were deeply involved in the coverage of the 1979 presidential election in particular.

SAMPLE SIZE

The sample size for the study are 20 print media establishments in Lagos, extracted from the population of 57 print media establishments in the country identified by Akinfeleye (2003) and Komolafe (2004). It is instructive to stress that 2/3rds of Nigerian print media establishments are based in Lagos. The 20 represents 64 percent of the 33 Lagos based print media currently in circulation in the country. Those ignored and no longer in circulation at the time the field work was conducted include: National Concord, Sketch, National Interests, The Monitor, The Democrat, TNT, Classique, Tempo, Lagos Horizon among others. In all, the sample size consists of 80 practicing senior journalists of the editor's rank, three former editors and head of ICT department of Lagos State INEC and Abuja Headquarters of INEC.

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

This study uses a combination of qualitative and quantitative method in its analysis of responses obtained from the key informants interview in a bid to enhance readers understanding of the issues addressed in the study. The study uses this method since the respondents can easily be quantified along with their specific responses. While analyzing the data from the field work, different issues were treated under appropriate research questions with appropriate tables as hereby presented.



Option	Frequency/percentage					
	1979	%	1999	%	2015	%
Maximum	-	-	70	87.5	80	100%
Minimal	13	16	10	12.5	-	-
Nil	67	84	-	-	-	-
Total	80	100%	30	100%	80	100%

Table 1, Q1: What role does ICT play in the late release of the results of the 1979, 1999 and 2015 presidential elections?

The Federal Electoral Commission (FEDECO) conducted the 1979 presidential election on Saturday, August 11. FEDECO withheld the results till Thursday, August 16 i.e. six days after it was held.

The 1999 presidential election on the other hand was held on February 27. Its outcome was not made public until March 1st, that is, four days after it was conducted. The 2015 presidential election similarly took place on March 28. Its results were released on March 31, that is, three days after it was held. Even though the respondents, having been involved in the coverage of the electoral process from the stage of party primaries, campaign, voting and collation had the results but could not publish the story on the winner of the election because the law empowered the electoral body to release it first officially following which they could then disseminate the information.

As could be seen from table 1 above, only 16 percent of the respondents agreed that ICT played a minimal role in the gathering and processing of political news/election results during the 1979 presidential elections while 84 percent poignantly declared that ICT played no role. During the 1999 presidential elections, 87.5 percent of the respondents claimed that ICT played a maximum role while 12.5 percent said it played a minimal role. In the 2015 election, all the respondents claimed ICT played a maximum role.

Available ICT facilities identified by the 16 percent of the respondents which were used in the news gathering, processing and reporting of election news/results during the 1979 elections, are: Telephone (Analogue), compugraphics, Radio/Tape Recorder, TV set, Telex machine, Type writers, cameras, Midget (Micro-tape recorders).



Apart from asserting that ICT played minimal role in the coverage of 1979 elections, they also attributed the delay in the release of the final results of the presidential election to non availability of up-to-date, modern and efficient ICT facilities at the disposal of FEDECO. However, all the 80 respondents said ICT played a maximum role in the gathering, processing and reporting of the results of the 1999 and 2015 presidential elections. They further claimed that the press was far ahead of INEC in 1999 concerning the acquisition of ICT gadgets needed for their operations.

Option	Frequency/percentage					
	1979	%	1999	%	2015	%
Maximum	-	-	80	100	80	100%
Minimal	-	-	-	-	-	-
Nil	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	-	-	80	100%	80	100%

Table 2. Q2: What role did ICT play in print media operations, especially in the area of editing of political news as well as pictures used by the Nigerian press during the 1979, 1999 and 2015 presidential elections?

Going by the statistical figure in table 2 above, it could be seen that all the respondents claimed that ICT played no role in the editing of stories/pictures of political personalities that were used to spice political news during the 1979 elections. However, all the respondent, agreed that ICT played a maximum role in the editing of political news/pictures during the 1999 and 2015 presidential elections. One of the three senior journalists chosen from the professional body, Prince Henry Odukomaiya, a former Managing Director/Editor-In-Chief of Champion newspapers recalled that a major editing style in the newsroom during the colonial days that was in vogue during the 1979 election was that of “cut and paste” system which ICT has completely eliminated today. His words: “The computer has completely eliminated the cumbersome, dirty and frustrating processes of newspaper production during the colonial era through compugraphy”. Prince Odukomaiya further recalled with nostalgia that under the outdated compugraphic system, stories were composed on compugraphic machine. After composition, you bring out the bromide and start developing it like a photographic film. “After developing the film, it goes to the graphic Artist who will do the paste up with the aid of cow gum; following which the



material will go to lithographers who in turn will patch the film before mounting it on the exposing machine to produce the plate”

Odukamaiya argued that it could take a whole day to produce a newspaper during the colonial period up to the first republic unlike now that a newspaper could be produced under few hours.

Furthermore, the former Editor-In-Chief of Champion Group of newspapers recalled that a lot of embarrassing developments took place while producing a newspaper prior to the arrival of ICT. He said for example, pasted headlines may unintentionally fall off during movement from the Graphic Artist to the lithographers.

Prince Odukamaiya, however, pointed out that ICT has eliminated all the problems. "It is a different story altogether today. All you need doing is just to sit down before the computer, type your story, edit straight on the computer, with the aid of spell check and produce an error free copy. The job today is 99.9% error free in that you no longer experience the possibility of one line dropping or one line falling in the process of carrying compugraphic bromide from one point to another. Whatever you have corrected on the computer nowadays is exactly what will come out. If you do a good job, it comes out good. If you did a bad job, it comes out bad. Computer has eliminated what we used to call the printer's devil in the newsroom".

The former editor of Daily Times, Prince Tony Momoh on his part says ICT has greatly enhanced photo editing. He recalled that during the colonial era, till 1979 elections, photo editing was done in a crude way. Momoh, the second senior journalist chosen from the professional body said for instance, whenever the need arose for cropping, a common practice then was that the photograph is folded to extract the personality needed.

He pointed out that the greater effect of cropping during the period was that it could damage the picture and consequently reduce its life span. The former Minister of Information however stressed that today, ICT has eliminated the crude system of photo editing, pointing out that "with scanner and the page maker, photo editing can be done with a touch of class."

"You know nowadays, once the picture is placed on the scanner, it is previewed to capture the details with the aid of your mouse, you can then crop the picture to what you desire. As a matter of fact, photo editing is done for -three reasons: cropping, scaling and sizing"; he added.

Innocent Okoye, the third former editor purposively chosen from the professional body on his part says the arrival of the internet has made it very easy for political reporters, feature writers, editorial writers, sports



writers and even sub-editors to locate information on a wide variety of topics.

He stressed that through the internet, background information, facts and figures, expert opinions among others could easily be sourced.

According to Okoye, "suppose you want to write an article on Kosovo but there is no library with up-to-date materials on the subject, you can easily find a source that is sufficiently knowledgeable on the subject through the internet. You can then send an e-mail to him, asking him your questions and he can reply through e-mail.

RQ3: *What are the ICT facilities available at the disposal of FEDECO and INEC for the gathering, collating and dissemination of election results during the 1979, 1999 and 2015 presidential elections?*

The study established a little contradiction between the responses of the Lagos state INEC and the Abuja headquarters of the electoral body to the above question which was tackled by the ICT units of the electoral umpire.

While the Lagos state INEC declined listing any ICT facilities and categorically stated that ICT was non-existent then, the Abuja head office listed computers and printers. Curiously, the Abuja office of INEC however admitted that ICT played little or no role in 1979 elections.

In a related development, while the Lagos state INEC attributed the delay in the release of the results of the 1979 presidential election results to non-availability of ICT equipments, leading to a situation whereby results were manually counted by hand from all the states of the federation, the Abuja head office of INEC rather said "the delay was caused by logistics problems". The Abuja head office of INEC further said the delay had nothing to do with non-availability of ICT.

Furthermore, while the Lagos INEC listed digital Radio transmitter and NITEL telephone lines as available ICT for the compilation of results of the 1999 presidential elections, the Abuja INEC listed computers and printers.

The Lagos INEC further argued that "in 1999, ICT was not much in existence save for only NITEL telephone lines and radio rooms which was used for the transmission of results." The Abuja head office of INEC on its part says ICT was used in the computation of results. The two offices however agreed that press invitations were distributed manually or physically by hands whenever they needed media coverage during the 1979 and 1999 elections.



The two offices equally agreed that INEC could release presidential election results within 24 hours if INEC offices are well-stocked with ICT equipments.

The deepening of ICT equipments in the state as well as all the local government offices of the federation will go a long way in helping INEC to promptly release election results.

The two offices agreed that the biometric computation of voters register for the 2015 elections coupled with the introduction of Permanent Voters Card (PVC) and Card Readers (CR) helped in injecting credibility to the electoral system.

RQ4: *What are the ICT facilities used by the Nigerian print media in the coverage and reportage of the 1979, 1999 and 2015 presidential elections?*

The respondents, among others, claimed that the following ICT facilities were at the disposal of the Nigerian print media for the coverage and reporting of the blow-by-blow account of the 1999 elections. They are:

Internet, Desktop/laptop computers, Digital cameras, Flash drives/DVD, Digitalmidgets/Audio recorder, On-line editing of political stories, Electronic printers, Fax machines, IPADS/smart phones i.e. blackberry, cable television, recorder pens with hidden cameras etc. The available ICT facilities for the coverage of the 1979 presidential election were earlier on listed under RQ1.

Among the prominent roles played by ICT in the timing of the release of the results of the 1999 and 2015 presidential elections, Obadare Obafemi (2015), editor, Saturday Punch says "it ensures early release of results as it aids collation, just as it also ensures transparency" Chiawolamoke Nwankwo (2015) another editor in the title says "use of ICT tape recorders helped political reporters to quote those interviewed accurately".

Lekan Olufodunrin,(2015) editor, The Nation On-line on his part says "it hasten compilation of results across the states of the federation". A similar view was expressed by Robert (2015) Obioha, News editor, The Sun newspapers who claimed that "it enabled journalists to gather, process and disseminate political news fast". Another editor in the same medium says "ICT has helped in reducing electoral violence and malpractices."

Thomas Imonikhe (2015), Weekend Editor of Champion newspaper says "it helped journalists file their stories faster and with relative ease.



Mideano Bayagbon (2015), Deputy Editor, Vanguard newspapers added the dimension of breaking news adding that "ICT has eliminated late arrival of stories across the federation and that stories are now being served to media audience fresh".

Jahman Anikulapo, (2015) editor, Sunday Guardian further contended that "ICT provides an opportunity for Nigerians to observe or monitor the conduct of elections across the country and consequently send their views to the media houses for publications. Roland

Ogbonaya, (2015) Deputy Editor, This Day Saturday Desk expressed a similar view, pointing out that "with ICT, one can cover event, send election results and pictures straight to them newsroom from either the polling centres or collation centre".

Habib Haruna (2015), News editor of Daily Independent says it makes the job of reporters easier and effective". Some of the respondents however said those ICT facilities were available in limited quantity.

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Implicit from the data presentation section of this paper is the fact that the performance of the press in Nigeria varied under the three presidential elections covered in this study. The performance was at optimum level during the 2015 elections.

The fluctuating performance of the press during the elections must have been dictated by acquisition of technological devices which aided efficient and prompt service delivery.

Another influencing factor was the fact that the media industries across the world are going through a transitional period and the media in Nigeria cannot afford to be left behind. Reflecting on the transition, Dizard Jr. (1997, p. 4) says in the context of this transition, old technologies are being adapted to new tasks. This is exactly what happened as some of the ICT facilities used in the coverage of 1979 elections have been adapted to new roles during the 1999 and 2015 elections.

The press being the tools by which INEC, political parties and other stakeholders tell their stories have equally gone through technological advancement. Baus and Lesly (1978, p. 408), while reflecting over such changes argued that as various weapons of war have advanced in scope, power and efficiency from the archaic spears and swords of the olden days to the various missiles and weapons of mass destruction today, so also have the media advanced from letters and signs and speeches to include radio, television, internet, Short Message Service (SMS) among others. It is interesting to note that unlike the 1979 and 1999 presidential elections, the political class used SMS effectively to reach out to the public during the



2015 elections. Therefore, the media environment in 2015 was entirely a different ball game altogether.

Writing on the new media environment, Severin and Tankard Jr. (2001, p. 4) say “we are living in a time when communication systems are evolving rapidly”. Wingston (2009, p. 30) similarly says “the emergence of new media technologies over the past 20 years has dramatically changed the media environment that many of us have been familiar with”. He stressed further that the internet in particular has changed the way in which most of us work and live.

Hofstetter (2001, p. 37), quoting Dick Brass, Vice President of Microsoft even projected technological communication trend by 2020. He predicted that “by the year 2018, the newspaper on paper could become extinct”. He stresses that “the future is electronic, the past is paper”. The Microsoft chief further asserts that by 2020, Webster’s Dictionary would have changed its first definition of a book to “a substantial piece of writing commonly displayed on a computer or other personal viewing device”. With the world going technological and becoming more and more sophisticated, it is expected that election coverage will similarly be technologically driven in furtherance of the emergence of global village. During the 1979 and 1999 presidential elections, there was no on-line medium in Nigeria. However, during the 2015 elections, there were many online media. Going by the trend observed during the field work for this study, some of the print media surveyed are fast switching over to online. Several factors are forcing publishers to rest their print publications and embracing online publications.

It is expected that electoral umpire would similarly be affected by the technological wave. If it happens, then whenever elections are conducted, the public might have the results within 24 hours as envisioned by the electoral umpire in this study. In virtually all the progressive democratic societies this day, technology is perceived as an enabler that can assist in realizing the national objectives of conducting credible, free and fair elections. Maitambari (2011, p. 82) pointed out, elections are data driven event and that the accuracy and protection of such data from unauthorized access should be accorded priority. The trend in progressive democratic African states, such as South Africa and Tanzania which Jinadu (2011, p. 58) described as “success stories of electoral governance in Africa”, is in the direction of technologically driven elections. Technology is the nerves of the political process. Remove technology from the political engineering of conducting any national election, the system is bound to be chaotic, nasty, and violence-prone as there would be lots of distortions otherwise called rigging, manipulation of results and falsifications. The system would



then be forced to carry too much load which if care is not taken can endanger the survival of the system. Therefore, the trend in progressive democratic societies in the direction of cybernetics through effective utilization of technology to gather, collate and dispatch information on-line.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study identified non-availability or insufficient ICT facilities as a major factor responsible for the delay in the release of the final results of all the presidential elections covered by this study. The study further discovered that the inability of the Nigerian press to provide timely information concerning the final results of the elections to their teeming audience during the elections was due to late rerelease of the results by the electoral body.

The study learnt that during the 1979 presidential election, political reporters sent their stories to their respective newsrooms through telex, radio message and telephone. Others in out-stations used public transport. However, the existence of cyber cafes and business centres however afforded political reporters of the opportunity of either sending their stories to the newsroom through e-mail or fax machine or calling through mobile phones during the 2015 elections.

The contradictions between the Lagos INEC and Abuja head office of INEC is an indication that most times, government officials resort to deliberate falsehood in a bid to cover up their failure or shortcomings. The study revealed the existence of more ICT facilities at the disposal of the Nigerian press during their coverage of the 1999 and 2015 presidential elections unlike that of 1979. This enabled the evening tabloids, such as PM News and TNT to promptly carry the news immediately the result was released by INEC.

Based on the above, the paper put forward the following recommendations.

1. That all INEC offices throughout the federation be linked with internet facilities as well as other ICT equipments which are highly indispensable in the organization and conduct of a credible, free and fair elections.

2. That INEC should make it a deliberate policy henceforth to store strategic information over lessons (gain) learnt in the conduct of every election in order that future researchers could have access to such information and for the improvement of the organization.

3. That deliberate efforts be made by media owners in the country to adequately equip the press with up-to-date ICT facilities, in a bid to raise the standard of election coverage in Nigeria to that of the US.



4. That government institution, especially INEC should adhere strictly to provisions of the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) by releasing information to media men over any story under investigation in order that public interest is better served all the time.

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