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DOES TRUST MEDIATE THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SOCIAL MEDIA ADVERTISING AND ELECTORATES' PATRONAGE OF POLITICAL PARTIES IN NIGERIA?

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Abstract: *In the present day democratic society, political parties have recognized the importance of social media as a veritable tool in enhancing social change and political engagement. This study was designed to determine whether trust mediates the relationship between social media political advertising and voter patronage of political partied in Nigeria. A cross sectional survey using 358 electorates in Plateau Central senatorial Districts. Data were analyzed using the descriptive statistics, correlation analysis and multi regression analysis. All analyses were performed using SPSS version 23. The finding buttresses the significant position of social media in promoting electorates participation. It revealed that social media significantly influence electorates' patronage. The study also revealed that trust partially mediate the relationship between social media and voter patronage in Nigeria. The study is only restricted to Plateau Central Senatorial District. Further research could be conducted to cover the entire state and the North Central Zone of Nigeria. A longitudinal approach should be employed to study the trend over a period of at least two years. Finally the variables used to influence electorate patronage may not be enough in explaining the phenomenon. There are other variables that contribute in influencing voters' decision of choosing a particular party over others. This study indicates a number of implications for political parties, policy makers and other stakeholders to develop keen interest in the use of social media in political electioneering process. Regulatory agencies should ensure people use these tools appropriately without disseminating false information.*

Keywords*: Social media advertising, Electorate patronage, Political parties, Commitment Trust Theory, Information Motivation and Behavioral Skills Model*

INTRODUCTION

In a present-day democratic society, one of the fundamental tasks of a politician is to communicate with the voters. This type of communication affects the political process. Politicians use communication and marketing tools to influence and build their own image, publicity and reputation (Vesnic –

Alujevic, 2013). Political parties are widely recognized and a common element of any campaign strategy (Brader, 2006). The political landscape has changed quite a bit in the last couple of decades. The social media and electronic media has been augmented to becoming a veritable tool in enhancing social change and political engagement since the Obama election campaign of 2008 and 2012 as well the Arab spring that spread through North Africa (especially Egypt, Tunisia, Libya, and Algeria and some part of Middle East countries (such Bahrain, Yemen, and Afghanistan) Certainly the use of social media and electronic media has always been central to democracy and its institutions (Dungse, Makinde & Chidozie, 2018).

In the field of marketing, political science, and information communication technology have buttressed the importance of social media in facilitating and promoting democratic processes, bringing about social change and commitment for using a particular product. (Dungse et al, 2018). Also, it is used as a tool to issue statements, circulate information, encourage political participation, allow individuals to freely express their opinions, and engage in exchanges with a vast virtual audience (Siddiqhi & Sigh, 2016). Besides, social media sites are critical, more efficient and effective tool in enhancing political participation, voter education and electorate behavior and recommendation

Despite the advantages of these media tools, it has strongly been criticized by many political watchers as a growing platform to promulgate cheeps lies, political blackmail, unhealthy publicity, and unsolicited propaganda. The recent development has to an extent raised a question mark as to the relevancies of social media in promoting healthy competition, peaceful co-existence, and unity in the country during and after electioneering periods. It is also used to spread hate speech and conspiracy theories, conducting smear campaigns and political parties and individuals to undermine the confidence of voters in electoral processes. (Ogbuji & Ogbobula, 2018)

Furthermore, the debate on the patronage of political parties reveals opposing opinions. For example, Bamidele, Oye, Ake, and Raji (2017) found that patronage of a political party by candidates of front line parties is based on god fatherism, economic, and power of their sponsors. Similarly, the study of Martinez, Gonalez, and Gracia (2017) in their study investigated the use of twitter on mobilization and political participation, a case study of the hashtag at Super Tuesday in the primaries of the elections of the USA. The study found that twitters accounts help in the mobilization and participation of other twitter users in developing interest in candidate of a political party.

Several studies have examined the effect of social media advertising on political patronage (Lewe & Jung, 2003; Ifukor, 2016) Gerodinos, 2012;

Ward 2012; Wong, 2007; Ifukor, 2016; Ogbuji & Ogbobula, 2018). However, the consensus among these authors suggests that social media advertising influences political patronage in diverse ways. More recently, the importance of social have been particularly highlighted in politics, giving the fact that the use of networking sites such as (Facebook) and micro blocking service (Twitter) is believed to have the potential positively influencing political participation (Stiaglitz, & DangXuan, 2012). Furthermore, we expect a direct intervening effect of social media advertising on electorates' patronage which is explained better through a mechanism of trust. As a result we expect that social media advertising will be use as communication tool to triggers voters involvement in election (Dasli, 2019)

There are limited researches focusing exclusively on the effect of social media advertising on electorate patronage of political parties in Nigeria. The few Nigerian studies on this topic have investigated the direct relationship between social media advertising and electorates' patronage such as (Gbadeyan, 2011; Ogbuji & Ogbuchile 2015; Tejumaiye, Simon & Obia 2018; Mustapha, Gbonegun & Mustapha, 2016; Gontur, Odewumi & Dashe & Dungse et al, 2018). All of these studies mainly focused on social media advertising on electorate patronage and use of social media for educational purposes. Interestingly, a search reveals a dearth of literature on the mediating role of trust in the relationship between social media advertising and voters' patronage. In addition, limited studies have been conducted on this important discourse from emerging countries perspective; hence this study is timely and relevant. The paper is organized into seven sections. The next section contains a review of the necessary literature and hypotheses testing. The third section discusses the methodology used in the study, while four sections dwell on the findings, while section five indicates the results and discussions of the findings. Section five focuses on the conclusion drawn from the study, and section six concentrates on possible policy recommendations. Lastly, section seven identifies the limitations to the study and areas for future studies

2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

2.1. Concept Review

2.1.1. Concept of Patronage

Patronage as a concept has long been investigated in marketing (O'cass, 2002, Kotler, 2012). Kotler (2003) suggested that political parties must explore the marketing concept to increase voter patronage. He further posited

that political associations must value electorate needs and expectations to design service offering to satisfy them. He further argued that political organizations must understand electoral needs and expectations offering to satisfy voters. O'cass (2002) defined patronage as the process of exercising the electoral franchise by voting for a particular party and candidate. Also, Engel et al. (1990) defined patronage as a decision-making process that reflects the electorate's preference and choice. The author further stated that voters form intentions to act after evaluating competing political parties using factors such as party identity, party image, and candidate credibility. Electorate patronage is important for the survival and growth of democracy. Only the aspirants with good advertising strategies and applying the right social media mix to meet the needs of their electorate by informing the teeming supporters of political parties to compete with other political parties.

2.1.2. Concept of Social Media Advertising

Discussion on social media advertising has been on the increase for nearly two decades (Safiullah, Pathak, Singh & Anshud, 2016). This, however, may be connected to the growing importance of information and communication technology through the internet (Ogbuji & Ogbobula, 2018). According to Tolbert and Mc Neal (2010), the increasing importance of and usage of internet technology and other electronic devices had necessitated the adoption of social media advertising in informing, persuading, and reminding both actual and potential voters about party programs and activities. By explaining the social media concept, Pillia et al, (2003), pointed out that it is a form of non – journalistic media strategy where organizations communicate to its market about product and service (party programs and activities). This could be done by informing of content sharing where political organizations distribute key programmes schedule to the public.

Kaplan and Haenlein, (2010) defined social media as the sets of internet-based applications that enlarge the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0 and that allow the formation and exchange of user-generated content. While social networking sites are the interface between individuals and social media and for many users the "internet" is synonymous with social networking sites (Hinton & Hjorth, 2013). One of the most interesting characteristics of social media is represented by the term "user-generated content" which refers to a different form of media and created by end-users (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

Besides, Brever (2012), assert that organizations are open to different social media platforms in disseminating information to the public among numerous of them, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, and Whats - up are among the most popular platforms used by most politicians to air their views in terms of criticism or support for a course of the programme. The authors also argue that political parties platform to market their candidates especially during the eve of an election. In recent time social media advertising and electronic media advertising has caused major changes pertaining the way people find groups of individuals with similar interest, the nature of information shared, sourced of information and availability of such information required by the group (Stieglitz, Dang-xuan, 2012).

2.1.3. Concept of Electorate Trust

In marketing, the role played by trust in developing and maintaining relationships during exchange processes such as buyer-seller relationship is important (Rachmat 2014). Trust is a costly term that has been defined differently by scholars from diverse disciples such as psychology, marketing, and politics to name a few. In the psychology literature, scholars have defined trust as a situation when parties in a relationship believe that neither party would take advantage of others (Himelbulm et al, 2012). Mayer, Davis and Schwman, 1995: 712) defined trust as the "readiness of a political party to be susceptible to the deed of a different political party based on the anticipation that other will carry out a particular action significant to the person to be trusted irrespective of the organization ability to monitor or control that other party." From the marketing perspective, trust is usually defined from an angle of brand trust, consumer trust, and supplier trust among others. Political trust is a normative expectation towards political institutions and actors to keep the promises made to electorates (Gronlund & Setala, 2007). Also, trust is the level of reliability ensured by one party to another within a given exchange relationship (Ngugen, et al, 2013).

Despite, the different definitions there seems to be some degree of convergence in the definitions of trust. Every one of the definitions above emphasizes three issues, firstly consumers (voters) amply trust on specific ideas (products and services). Secondly, it relates to the confidence level that that individual has on another; thirdly it is the outcome of expectations being met by political parties in a relationship. In the social media advertising sphere, the trust constructs have focused on electorates or voters in candidates' election trust, government trust among others.

2.2. Hypotheses Development

2.2.1. Social Media advertising and Electorate Patronage

Some empirical studies have examined the effect of social media advertising on political patronage (Ifukor, 2016; Gerodinos, 2012; Ogbuji, et al, 2018). However, the consensus among these authors suggests that social media advertising influences voter patronage in diverse ways. For instance, Robertson et al. (2010) found that Facebook has a significant effect on young voter's decisions that citizens use social networking sites to gather information about political organizations and candidates, as well as to communicate with them and express their opinion. Also, Lewe and Vung (2003) reveal the likelihood of enhancing voter patronage using emotional pictures, images, and texts. In a similar vein, Dungse et al, (2018), Ogbuji and Ogbobula (2018), established that social media positively affects electorate patronage through the use of Facebook and other social media sites. Okolo, Ugonna, Nebo, and Obikeze (2017) examine the effect of Face book (one the tools of social media in the marketing of political candidates in Nigeria their findings revealed that there is a significant positive relationship between usage of Face book as an awareness social media tool in the projection of a political candidate's image in Nigeria. Similarly, Okeke et al (2016) explored the effect of social media in southeastern Nigeria found that Face book a social media tool has a significant effect on the electorate decision making and participation in Nigerian election. Further, Jackson and Lillaker et al (2011) validated that content such as videos and images created through facebook are employed for social connection among the electorate to share their opinions, togetherness, and even their emotions.

Consistent with the theory of Information Motivation and Behavioral Skills Model (Fisher & Fisher, 1992) that social media has become a valuable resource to accelerate political discourse. Electorates that are properly informed via the social media tend to increase one goal to patronizing a political platform of their choice base it's manifestoes.. We, therefore, consider social media as an important tool and an antecedent of electorate patronage. Consequently, we suggest the following hypothesis:

H1: Social media advertising has a positive significant influence on electorate patronage.

2.2.2. Social Media advertising and Trust

The literature review on this topic suggests that there is a nexus between social media political advertising and trust exists. The existence of this relationship emanates from the reality that people participate in elections globally or to

protest for bad governance is achieved through the use of social media which has become a tool for sharing information, interacting with other users, and also political participation. Marketing scholars such as Pennanen, Tiainen, and Luomala, (2007), Chahal and Verma (2017) have highlighted the importance of trust as an important factor in establishing long term relationships, it is also a very important component for customer participation that help create more satisfaction, good image, and patronage. In this context, Dabula (2017) opined that voters share and seek information (political ideologies, candidates, and political parties) on social media because of the atmosphere of trust between friends\ colleagues on the social networking environment. Seo, Park, and Choi (2020) established that trust is a concept that plays an important role in social and economic interaction in an uncertain political atmosphere used by different scholars. A study conducted by Håkansson and Witmer (2015) investigated the existence of the relationship between social media usage and trust, and also looked at whether trust can be created through connections on social media. They concluded a nexus between social media advertising and trust. Dabula (2017) and Vaccari et al, (2015), sustained that there exist a very significant positive connection between social media and trust and then voter patronage.

Consistent with the empirical evidence and the theoretical lenses of Motivation and Behavioral Skills Model and Commitment Trust Theory we content that trust being a tool of motivation can change the intentions of voters in using social media advertising influences electorate's patronage. Accordingly, we posit the following hypothesis.

H2: Social media advertising has a significant positive effect on trust.

2.2.3. Trust and Electorate Patronage

Trust is one of the important concepts in marketing (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). Trust is a critical factor in building relationships with others (Kimpakom & Tocquers, 2009). Keller (X) particularly argued that trust can destroy or improve a relationship between two partners. However, understanding the environment of the political brand, it relationship with voters will help in creating trust and consequently leads to voters patronage. (Rachmet, 2014; Abdelbaset, Alkhawaldeh, Sellah & Halim, 2016). A relationship between trust and patronage has been investigated. Nevertheless there are conflicting findings on the relationship between trust and patronage. Those studies that revealed a positive and direct with patronage are (Leninkumar, 2017, and Dabula, 2017). Furthermore, some studies have further confirmed that trust has been argued as one of the critical predictors of voter (electorate) patronage

in the marketing literature (Estella van, 2016; Chinomana & Dubihela, 2014). Whereas, Hosseini and Nahad (2012) reported contrary findings that trust negatively relates to voter loyalty.

According to commitment trust theory, relationships amongst individuals exist when trust and commitment are mutual (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). Dabula (2017) added that political parties that adhered to the principles of relationship marketing build a long-lasting bond with their electorates, as an upshot voter returned such good gestures with a vote. Patronage is sustained by the continuous and consistent meeting the promises made to the electorates; failure to fulfill such commitments may result in a trust deficit. Based on the abovementioned we hypothesize that:

H3: Trust has a significant positive effect on Electorates patronage.

2.2.4. Mediating Role of Trust

Authors have considered trust as an important tool in building the relationship among people. It is important for successful cooperation and effectiveness in organizations, reduces transaction costs, and even resolves intentional political conflicts (Brown & Uslaner, 2002; Iroghama, 2012). In other words, trust is triggered by a commitment from partners resulting in fulfilling the needs of both parties. We expect trust to mediate the relationship between social media and electorate patronage such that political parties or candidates commitment will feel appreciative all times to fulfill their pledges to the voting public (Dabula, 2017)

Empirical evidence has sustained the intervening role of trust, in the study of Dabula (2017), it was established that trust mediates the relationship between political marketing using social media and voter trust. Also, voter trust, voter intention, and voter loyalty are positively related. Similarly, Kim, Chung, and Lee (2011) infer that information and engagement of citizens with political parties through social media lead to trust and this stimulates their interest in political participation. Other findings suggested that trust relates positively to voters' loyalty (Ngugen, Leclerc & Leblanc, 2013; Mahmud & Gray, 2011). Also, trust was found to strongly mediate the relationship between social mediate and electorate patronage (Panizza, Peters & Larraburu, 2018).

Based on the forgone, the paper asserts through the theoretical paradigm of Information Motivation and Behavioral Skills Model (Fisher & Fisher, 1992) and Commitment Trust Theory (Morgan & Hunt, 1994) that social media has become a valuable resource to accelerate political discourse. Electorates that are

properly informed via the social media tend to increase one intention to vote (Dabula, 2017).Since it has been established that trust positively mediates with voter patronage. We, therefore, expect it to mediate the relationship between social media with electorate patronage, In line with this, we hypothesize that

> *H4: Trust mediates the relationship between social media advertising and Electorate Patronage.*
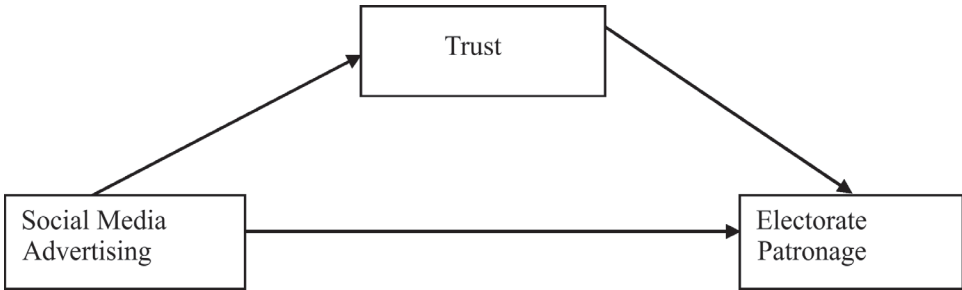

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of the Study

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Design, Population and Sample Procedure

The study employs a cross-sectional research design to investigate the hypotheses generated in this study. This study was both descriptive and analytical. We drew the participants in this from population of eligible registered voters in Plateau central senatorial constituency. Data available from INEC reveal a total of 321, 310 spread across the five local government areas. In all a total 358 valid questionnaires were analyzed out of 400 questionnaires administered representing 89.5% respond rate.

3.2. Measures of Study Variables

The questionnaire items in this study were adapted from previous studies base on their relevance to this study. These include Electorate Patronage (Dagger, Sweeney & Johnson, 2007; Nisco & Warnaby, 2013), Social Media ( ) and Trust (Delgado- Ballester & Munuera - Aleman, 2005)

Electorate Patronage scale was adapted from (Dagger et al, 2007) the items adapted for the study include, the items were measured in seven Likert scales of strongly disagree 1 to strongly agree 7.

Social Media; The measures for this study was adapted from Dabula, (2007) the scale was developed to investigate the application of social media

advertising in voter intention to vote and it has a Cronbach Alpha reliability value of 0. 892. Sample of the questionnaire items include. I believe social media is a better source of information than other media platform (e.g newspaper, T.V), I think social media provides useful and objective political information and I believe politicians should pay more alteration to their followers attitudes on social media.

Trust; We adapted from (Delgado- Ballester & Munuera - Aleman, 2005) the scale; it has a Cronbach's alpha of 0.868, which demonstrates high reliability? It contains three items and the sample included, these political parties are reliable, I think that this political party does not hide the information I need to know. I believe this political party respects its promises.

3.3. Data Processing and Analysis

In this study, data were collected and analyzed using the statistical package for social science (SPSS) version 23. A total of 400 questionnaires were dispersed and 358 were returned, representing 88 percent response rate. All the collected questionnaires were referenced, and elements in the questionnaire coded to sort data entry easy. Descriptive statistics were predictable for the various constructs. Frequency tables were made for all the variables, and data consistency was checked using the Cronbach's alpha index. Inferential data analysis was done using Pearson Correlation Coefficient, Regression Analysis. The correlation was used to establish the direction of the relationship between the dependent and the independent variables. Multiple regression analysis was used to determine the relationship between social media advertising and electorate patronage and mediating relationship of trust, social media advertising and voter patronage. Testing hypothesis using p-value was made because it gave the strength of the decision. According to Henseler, Ringle and Sarstedt (2015) a significance level of 0.05 is suggested as it denotes that the results are at 95% confidence level

4. RESULTS AND FINDING

The characteristic of the respondents in Table 1 reveals that, 58.10 % were female, 41. 90% were male, 55.30% are single, 49. 16% are within the age bracket of 18- 27 years while the remaining 50.54% is shared among 28 – 37 years, 38 - 47 and above 47 years. Also the result shows that 59.77% of respondents are students.

Table 1
Demographic Profile

Variables		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Female	208	58.10
	Male	150	41.90
Marital status	Single	198	55.30
	Married	102	28.50
	Others	58	16.20
Age	18 – 27 years	176	49.16
	28 – 37 years	105	29.33
	38 – 47 years	52	14.53
	Above 47 years	25	6.93
Occupation	Students	214	59.77
Students	Self employed	78	21.79
Self employed	Employed	66	18.44

Based on the Table 2, the Cronbach's Alpha for the variables show high reliability, because the values are higher the threshold value of 0.70, therefore the instrument has excellent reliability in terms of internal consistency. The items that has a lower reliability score during the pilot test have been modified or replaced with another item has shown high internal consistency proving that the final questionnaire and scale has a high reliability

Table 2
Results and Finding

Variables	Number of items	Crobach Alpha N= 358	Crobach Alpha Pilot study N = 30
Social Media Advertising	4	.907	.715
Voter Patronage	4	.784	.567
Trust	4	.893	.695

The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) is a method used to measure sample adequacy that index higher than 0.90s is excellent, 0.80s is commendable, 0.70s is adequate, 0.60s is average, and 0.50s is miserable and below 0.50 is unacceptable (Anastasiadou, 2011) .In this study, the value of the whole constructs is 0.923 signifying the factor analysis is consistent and statistically significant because it is higher than 0.90

Table 3
Sample Adequacy Test

Kaiser Meyer- Olkin measure of sampling Adequacy	.750
Bartletts Test of approximation chi square	809.521
Sphericity df	136
Sig	.000

Table 4
Factors derived from the rotated component matrix

Variables	Factor1	Factor 2	Factor 3
	Social media	Trust	Voter patronage
Soc Med 1	.837		
Soc Med 2	.889		
Soc Med 3	.826		
Soc Med 4	.876		
Trust 1		.882	
Trust 2		.840	
Trust 3		.837	
Trust 4		.863	
Patronage 1			.780
Patronage 2			.837
Patronage 3			.853
Patronage 4			.870

Exploratory factor analysis is used to find latent variables which better explain the data in table 4 all the latent variables have a factor loading greater than 0.5. The results of factor analysis revealed that 12 out of the 12 items converged.

Table 5
Descriptive Statistics

Variables	Mean	Std dev	Skewness Statistics	Std error	Kurtosis Statistics	Std error
Social media	3.578	1.205	. 686	.129	-.572	.257
Trust	3.402	1.200	.648	.129	-.658	.257
Voter Patronage	3.237	1.156	.265	.129	-.1.102	.257

Among the three variables social media has the highest (M=3.578, STD=1.205). The second highest mean value is scored by trust which have the (M= 3.402, STD=1.200) while voter patronage has the lowest value (M= 3.237, STD = 1. 156). In multivariate analysis the data normality is ensured if the absolute value is within (<0.1) or (<. 001) The skewness of this data set is seen between 0.265 to 0.686, indicating that the skewness of this data set is inacceptable range falling under the suggested value. However the kurtosis indicated that voter patronage is greater than -1.00, but suggesting the rest is on an acceptable range.

Table 6 shows the correlation analysis generated on all the variables to determine the Pearson's correlation coefficient with a two tailed significance test the results show that the independent, mediating and dependent variables that is social media advertising, trust and voter patronage are moderately and positively correlated since the values are .511, .649 and .570

Table 6
Correlation Matrix

Variables	Social media advertising	Trust	Voter Patronage
Social media advertising	1	.511**	.649**
Trust		1	.570**
Voter Patronage			1

Table 7: ANOVA results show that the model is found to be significant (P=0.000). The model is capable of explaining 55% of the variance voter patronage (R square value). The generalization of this model to the population was .549; the significant F test shows that relationship of (218.402 P> 0.000). Test of coefficients of independent variables shows that social media advertising (.246, P=0.000) and trust (.620, P=0.000) social media advertising and trust are found to be significant to voter patronage. Multicollinearity problem does not exist among the variables, since VIF found in this study is less than 10, likewise the tolerance values are 0.473, 0.473 and 0.365 are more than the acceptable value of 0.10.

Model summary	R	R^2	Adjusted R	Standard error of the estimate			
Model	.743	.552	.549	.549			
ANOVA Model							

	Sum of squares	Df	Mean square	F	Sig		
Regression	343.551	2	171.775	218.402	.000		
Residual	272.212	355	.787				
Total	622.763	357					
Coefficient [b]							
	Unstandardized coefficient		Standar-dized coeffi-cient				
	Beta	Std error	Beta	T	Sig	Tol	Vif
Constant	.774	.125		6.167	.000		
Social media	.248	.048	.246	5.178	.000	.473	2.113
Trust	.620	.050	.591	5.178	.000	.473	2.113
Voter Patronage	.106	-033	.470	12.423	.000	.365	2.741

Table 8
Hypotheses Interpretation

Hypotheses	Beta coefficient	Significant (p<0.05)	Decision
H1. Soc Med-> Pat	.246	.000	Supported
H2. Soc Med-> Tru	.591	.000	Supported
H3. Tru -> Pat	.470	.000	Supported

We used Baron and Kenny (1986) methodology to determine the mediating role of trust on the relationship between social media advertising and voter patronage as seen in table 9

Table 9
Mediation analysis of trust on the relationship between social media advertising and voter patronage First Step Regression Analysis

Dependent variable: Voter Patronage beta .320 p. 000
Independent variable; Social media advertising
R= .320 Adjusted R^2= .098 F= 22.399, T= 4.733 p. 000
 Second Step Regression Analysis
Dependent variable: Trust beta .496 P .000
Independent variable: Social media advertising
R= .496 Adjusted R^2= .242 F= 63.619 T = 7.976 P .000
Third Step Regression Analysis
Dependent variable: Voter patronage beta t p
Independent variable: Social media advertising .246 5.178 .000
 Trust .591 2.423
 R= .788 Adjusted R^2 = .618 F= 290.050 P .000

Table 11: indicates the mediation analysis results about mediating role of trust on the relationship between social media advertising and voter patronage. The first step regression analysis illustrates that social media advertising is significantly related to voter patronage. The second one shows that there is a significant relationship between social media advertising and trust. The third step analysis indicates trust is related to voter patronage, when controlling for social media advertising. Finally, evaluating the results in the first and third step regression analysis, it can be seen reducing the beta coefficients of social media advertising (.320 < .246) and p value are still significant (p< 0.000), so H4 hypothesis is accepted and trust mediates the relationship between social media advertising and electorate patronage.

6.   DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This study is conducted to determine the role of social media political advertising among Nigerian voters with particular reference to Plateau Central Senatorial Constituency. The reason for this is attributed to the role social media plays in communicating political ideologies of parties and their candidates and a number of literature shows how social media political advertising can be used to predict election outcomes in different countries (Digrazia, Mckelvey, Bollen & Rojas, 2013). This study used social media political advertising as an antecedent to voter behaviour. In addition, we explored the role of trust as the mechanism of the relationship.

As hypothesized, social media political advertising was found to associate positively and significantly with electorate patronage in accordance with (H1) this is consistent with previous findings which established a correlation between social media advertising and voter decisions, outcomes and loyalty (Safiullah, Pathak, Singh, & Anshud, 2016; Dabula, 2017). Similarly, Martin (2015) argued that tweeter and face book in recent times are arguably the most popular platforms used by most politicians to air their views in terms of criticisms or support for a course of programme. Also it is also in tandem with the argument Kirk and Schill (2011) concluded that usage of social media advertising creates a digital agora, a participatory space that enhanced civic engagement, citizen efficacy and political participation. According to them, electorates not only received campaign messages and political information but also engage both candidates and each other in deliberations about their intention to vote (Kirk & Schill, 2011: 326).

The results of H2 reveal the impact of social media political advertising on trust. The significant result was expected as underpinned in Commitment

Trust Theory. First, the relationship which was supported in H2 is on the basis that digital skills and generalized trust in different ethnic groups, Latinos, Africa American and Anglo- Americans in the U.S. Also, this discovery aligns with findings of Valenzuela, Park and Kee (2009), which showed that a positive relationship between the intensity of face book use and college students, life satisfaction, social trust, civic engagement and political participation. The same conclusion was reached by Dabula (2017) who reported that social media political advertising has a positive relationship with voter trust.

Similarly, the significant relationship between trust and electorates patronage in H3 supported the previous findings of Dabula (2017) and Fadi, Mohammed & Osman (2014). Which rightly relates trust with voter loyalty? This is expected because when voters trust a candidate of political party base on its integrity and other factors that would motivate them to advertising the candidate on social media which in turn translates in votes.

The mechanism role is consistent with the work of Panniza, Peters and Larrabaru (2018) where trust was found to mediate the relationship between social media advertising and electorate patronage. This is also in line with the findings of Dabula (2017) which reveals that trust mediates the relationship between social media and electorate patronage such that political parties or candidates commitment will feel appreciative all times to fulfil their pledges to the voting public.

7. CONCLUSION

7.1. Implications of Research Findings

Having surveyed non exhaustively the extant literature regarding electorate patronage a framework was carefully considered as plan in this study to determine the role of social media and trust as predictor and mediator respectively in proffering more thoughtful on the topic. From the analyses conducted through SPSS Version 23, the results are analysed and discussed earlier obviously have some implications to theory and practice.

Theoretically, we address two gaps in this study where scarcity of literature was established. First we earlier found limited empirical studies linking the role of social media in attenuating electorate patronage among voters. Our argument was underpinned in Information Motivation and Behavioral Skills Model (Fisher & Fisher, 1992) that social media has become a valuable resource to accelerate political discourse. Electorates that are properly informed via the

social media tend to increase one intention to vote (Dabula, 2017). Findings in this study confirmed that social media political advertising has tendency to increase electorates' intention to vote. The present findings underscores the strength of information motivation and behavioral skills model in the relationship social media advertising and electorate patronage and possibly motivated by voter realization of their importance in determining who governed them.

Secondly, the significant of trust in the framework recognized the mechanism through which social media attenuates voter patronage through the lens Commitment Trust Theory. This suggests that the relationship between social media and electorates' patronage is also indirect. In underscoring our earlier argument we had posited that social media leads to voter intention trust which in turns leads to loyalty. By implication the significant intervening finding has strengthens the knowledge boundaries between positive attitude and intention of voter to trust and political participation. This will open up a new frontier for further investigation between social media advertising and other variables such as political mobilization, crowd sourcing and political engagement (Ayankoya, Cullen & Calitz, 2014)

Practically, the findings in this study offer another perspective to policy makers, key participants in electioneering practices, regulatory bodies and electorates on ways to use social media effectively without causing harm to any parties involved. Social media as described earlier is the sets of internet-based applications that enlarge the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0 and that allow the formation and exchange of user-generated content (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). These tools are used to influence various segments of voters' behavior and intentions. Thus, this is critical to political parties' leadership, such that they could leverage on electorates positive towards their candidates to participate in political process to achieve the promises made to electorates. Political leaders could also benefit from this study on the course of identifying and selecting candidate that effectively know how to use social media platform to advance their interest and political programmes that would be beneficial to the electorates. Since social media marketing have been found to positively influence voter intention and decision will help immensely the whittling process to ensure that only those with high propensity to succeed base on the decisive factor are considered.

Besides, having established the intervening role of trust, it further demands the importance of giving close attention to the nexus between trust and its implication on voter intention and behaviour. Political leaders who are

acquainted with the hazy boundary in voters trust are likely to understand the vitality more.

7.2. Conclusion

In summary, this study has the major drive of testing the role of the social media advertising on voter patronage, through the mechanism of trust. The suggestion was in reply to other researchers' recommendations that more research should be investigated with the introduction of a mediator and moderator to better explain the relationships between the independent and dependent variables. From the results obtained in this study, we established empirically an indirect relationship between social media advertising and electorates' patronage through the intervening role of trust. We found the results astute in linking social media advertising and trust in determining the success of their political campaign. Consistent with these findings, we discovered a number of theoretical as well as practical contributions from the outcome in this study. In addition, we acknowledged the limitations of this study and reproached the way forward for future researchers to further extend the discussion.

7.3. Limitations of the study

The study is restricted to Plateau State, Nigeria. Further studies could be conducted to cover the remaining senatorial constituencies in plateau state and north central Nigeria. Also this study employed the cross sectional approach, a longitudinal approach should be employed to study the trend over a period of at least two years. Finally, just focusing of trust as a mediating variable on the relationship between social media political advertising and voter patronage may not be adequate in clarifying the occurrence. In view of that, there is the need to look at other factors that may contribute in influencing voter behaviours that were not part of this study.

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