

**POLITICAL CAMPAIGN STRATEGIES AND VOTER'S BEHAVIOUR IN BENIN
CITY: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF 2019 AND 2023 ELECTIONS**

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**BEING A RESEARCH PROJECT SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF
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CERTIFICATION

We, certify that this research project was carried out by **NESTA OSAS EHIGIE**

in the Department of Political Science, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Benin, Benin City, Nigeria. It is adequate in scope and quality in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Bachelor of Science (BSc.) degree in Political Science.

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DEDICATION

This project work is dedicated to God Almighty for the grace, wisdom and health provided to me throughout this academic journey.

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TABLE OF CONTENT

	Pages
TITLE PAGE	i
CERTIFICATION	ii
DEDICATION	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	iv
TABLES OF CONTENT	v
ABSTRACT	ix
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	
1.1 Background to the Study	1

1.2 Statement of the Problem	3
1.3 Research Questions	4
1.4 Objective of the Study	4
1.5 Scope of the Study	5
1.6 Significance of the Study	5
1.7 Definition of Terms	7

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMWORK

2.1 Conceptual Review	7
2.1.1 Political Campaign Strategies	7
2.1.2 Voter's Behaviour	10
2.1.3 Digital Media and Electoral Communication	14
2.1.4 Factors affecting Voting	19
2.2 Theoretical framework	23
2.3 Empirical review	27
2.4 Summary and Gaps in Literature	31

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction	35
3.1 Research Design	35
3.2 Population of Study Population	36
3.3 Sample Size	36
3.4 Sampling Technique	36
<i>3.5 Method of Data Collection</i>	<i>37</i>
3.6 Research Instrument	37
3.7 Validity of Research Instruments	38
3.8 Reliability of Research Instrument	38
3.9 Method of Data Analysis	38

CHAPTER FOUR: DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction	40
4.2 Presentation of result	40
4.3 Discussion of Finding	48

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1.Introduction	52
5.2 Summary of Finding	52
5.3 Conclusion	54
5.4 Recommendation	54
5.5 Contributions to Knowledge	55
5.6 Suggestions for Further Studies	56

BIBLIOGRAPHY	58
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APPENDIX

ABSTRACT

This study examines the evolution of political campaign strategies and their impact on voter behaviour in Benin City, Nigeria, through a comparative analysis of the 2019 and 2023 general elections. In 2019, campaigns predominantly relied on traditional methods such as rallies, posters, radio jingles, door-to-door canvassing, and face-to-face mobilization, which reinforced party loyalty, personality politics, and ethno-regional affiliations, particularly in rural and semi-urban areas. By 2023, there was a notable shift toward digital strategies, including social media platforms (Twitter, Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram), targeted messaging, influencer endorsements, and data-driven audience segmentation, which effectively mobilized urban youth and disillusioned voters seeking transparency, reform, and candidate competence over party identity. Despite this, challenges persisted, including the digital divide (limiting online reach in rural areas), misinformation, fake news, vote-buying, voter apathy, and security concerns. The research highlights hybrid campaign models combining traditional and digital approaches, variations in voter behaviour across socio-demographic groups (e.g., age, urban-rural divide), and the growing influence of candidate-based politics. Guided by research questions on predominant strategies, differences in voter behaviour, the role of digital media, and influencing factors, the study aims to identify campaign methods, analyze behavioural shifts, assess media influences, and investigate responsiveness factors. Focused solely on Benin City and the two specified election cycles, this work contributes to understanding political communication, enhances strategies for ethical engagement, supports voter education efforts, and provides insights for strengthening democratic processes in Nigeria.

POLITICAL CAMPAIGN STRATEGIES AND VOTER BEHAVIOR IN EDO STATE: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF 2019 AND 2023 ELECTIONS

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Political campaigns serve as a vital component of democratic processes by informing, persuading, and mobilizing voters. In Nigeria, and particularly in Edo State, election periods are often characterized by intense political activity, with parties and candidates employing a wide range of strategies to secure electoral success. Campaign strategies ranging from traditional door-to-door canvassing, rallies, and radio jingles, to modern tactics like social media engagement, targeted messaging, and influencer endorsements play a significant role in shaping voter perceptions and ultimately, voting behavior. (Akinola & Adekunle, 2021).

In the 2019 elections, traditional campaign techniques such as rallies, posters, radio broadcasts, and door-to-door mobilization dominated the political space. These methods, while effective in reaching rural and semi-urban populations, often lacked depth in policy communication and instead emphasized party loyalty and personality politics (Akinola & Adekunle, 2021). However, by 2023, a significant transformation had taken place: candidates increasingly embraced digital campaign strategies, leveraging platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, WhatsApp, and Instagram to reach a broader and more diverse electorate (Bassey et al., 2024). Social media emerged as a pivotal tool for agenda-setting and influencing political discourse. In particular, the 2023 elections witnessed unprecedented digital engagement from young and urban voters, driven by dissatisfaction with traditional political elites and a growing demand for transparency and reform (Okon et al., 2025). Research found that platforms like WhatsApp and Twitter were not only

used to disseminate campaign messages but also fostered interactive dialogues between candidates and voters, ultimately influencing voter preferences (Ngoka et al., 2024).

Nonetheless, while digital campaigns amplified candidate visibility, they were not without limitations. In rural communities with lower digital literacy and poor internet access, traditional campaign strategies continued to dominate. This created a dual landscape in which urban voters were influenced more by online narratives and candidate branding, whereas rural voters relied heavily on local opinion leaders, face-to-face mobilization, and party identity (Odoh-Innocent, 2025). Moreover, political branding and narrative framing became central features of campaign strategy. The Labour Party's performance in the 2023 elections, for example, was significantly boosted by strong digital branding and reformist messaging that resonated with younger, urban, and disillusioned voters (Okoro, 2025). These findings underscore a growing shift from party-centric to candidate-centric politics, where voters make decisions based more on perceived competence, integrity, and digital presence than on traditional party affiliations (Pabon et al., 2024).

Despite these advancements, systemic challenges such as misinformation, vote buying, voter apathy, and security concerns continued to shape electoral behavior. Studies from the 2023 cycle noted that although social media expanded voter education, it also facilitated the spread of fake news and hate speech, complicating the decision-making process for many voters (Onayinka et al., 2024). In Edo State, this duality in campaign strategy between digital innovation and traditional mobilization provides a unique case study for examining how these approaches influence different segments of the electorate. Given its socio-political diversity and history of competitive elections, Edo offers fertile ground for assessing not only how campaigns are

conducted but also how voters interpret, internalize, and act upon campaign messages. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for strengthening democratic participation, enhancing electoral integrity, and guiding future political strategy development. Thus, this study aims to critically compare the political campaign strategies used in Edo State during the 2019 and 2023 general elections and assess how these strategies influenced voter behavior across different socio-demographic groups. In doing so, it contributes to the broader discourse on political communication, democratic engagement, and electoral behavior in Nigeria.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Despite the growing sophistication of political campaign strategies in Nigeria, there is limited empirical research on how these strategies influence voter behavior at the state level, particularly in Edo State. While the 2019 and 2023 elections revealed significant differences in how political campaigns were executed, there remains a knowledge gap regarding the effectiveness of these approaches and their impact on voters' decisions. Moreover, political communication in Nigeria is often marred by misinformation, violence, and vote-buying, which complicate the assessment of genuine voter behavior. Without a comparative analysis of the campaigns and voter reactions in both electoral cycles, stakeholders may lack critical insights necessary for improving democratic participation and electoral integrity in future elections, and to the best of the researchers knowledge there is no comparative research on political campaign strategies and voter behavior in Edo state 2019 and 2023 election.

1.3 Research Questions

This study is guided by the following research questions:

1. What were the predominant political campaign strategies used in the 2019 and 2023 general elections in Edo State?
2. How did voter behavior differ between the 2019 and 2023 elections in Edo State?
3. What role did digital media play in shaping campaign strategies and voter decisions in the 2023 election compared to 2019?
4. How did socio-demographic factors influence voter responsiveness to campaign strategies in both election years?

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to examine political campaign strategies and their influence on voter behavior in Edo State, with a comparative focus on the 2019 and 2023 general elections.

Specifically, the study aims to:

1. Identify and compare the political campaign strategies used in the 2019 and 2023 elections.
2. Analyze variations in voter behavior between the two election cycles.
3. Assess the influence of digital and traditional media on voter perception and decision-making.
4. Investigate the relationship between socio-demographic characteristics and voter responses to different campaign strategies.

1.5 Scope of the Study

The study is limited to Edo State and focuses on the comparative analysis of political campaigns and voter behavior during the 2019 and 2023 general elections. It will explore campaign methods employed by major political parties, media utilization, and voter responses across different demographics. The analysis excludes local government elections and does not extend to other Nigerian states or elections outside the specified period.

1.6 Significance of the Study

This research is significant for several reasons. Firstly, it contributes to the scholarly understanding of political communication and electoral behavior in a sub-national context. By examining Edo State, the study provides localized insights into how evolving campaign tactics affect voter decisions. Secondly, the findings will be valuable to political parties, candidates, and campaign managers seeking to develop more effective and ethical strategies for future elections. Thirdly, electoral commissions and civil society organizations may use the insights to design better voter education programs and combat manipulative campaign practices. Finally, the study will serve as a reference for future researchers exploring the intersection of media, politics, and voter behavior in democratic settings.

1.7 Limitations of the Study

The study is limited to the general elections held in Edo State in 2019 and 2023. It focuses on voter behavior in response to political campaign strategies and does not include the internal party dynamics, post-election litigation, or electoral outcomes in detail. Additionally, data collection

may be constrained by limited access to comprehensive campaign records or the willingness of respondents to disclose their voting motivations honestly.

1.8 Definition of Terms

Political Campaign Strategies: Planned activities and communication techniques used by political parties or candidates to persuade voters and gain electoral support.

Voter Behavior: The decision-making process and actions of individuals in choosing political candidates or parties during elections.

Comparative Study: A research approach that analyzes and contrasts two or more cases to identify similarities and differences.

Digital Media: Online platforms such as social media, websites, and digital advertising used for political communication and engagement.

Traditional Campaign Methods: Conventional forms of political outreach including rallies, posters, radio, and face-to-face mobilization.

Electoral Cycle: The periodic sequence of events related to the organization and conduct of elections.

Socio-Demographic Factors: Characteristics such as age, gender, education, income, and occupation that influence individual behavior and preferences.

Political Communication: The dissemination of information and messaging by political actors aimed at influencing public opinion and behavior.

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CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Conceptual Review

2.1.1 Political Campaign Strategies

Political campaign strategies are evolving mechanisms designed to influence voter perceptions, mobilize support, and ultimately drive electoral success. In democratic societies, campaign strategies serve as essential tools through which political candidates and parties communicate their vision, policy proposals, and personal appeal to the electorate (Adebayo & Oluwaseun, 2022). These strategies are typically grounded in persuasive communication and political marketing theories that emphasize targeted messaging, audience segmentation, and media utilization. In Nigeria, campaign strategies have historically been dominated by traditional methods such as rallies, posters, radio and television advertisements, community meetings, and door-to-door canvassing. These methods have been particularly effective in rural and semi-urban areas where digital infrastructure is limited and political engagement remains deeply communal (Aluko & Omotosho, 2021). For instance, campaign rallies in Edo State during the 2019 general elections were characterized by large public gatherings, vibrant cultural displays, and the physical presence of party candidates. These events served not only to mobilize supporters but also to reinforce existing party loyalties and showcase the political dominance of certain candidates.

However, the limitations of traditional strategies began to surface as electorates increasingly demanded issue-based campaigns and transparency. Posters and billboards, while highly visible,

often lacked substantive content and were more focused on candidate imagery than policy. Similarly, radio and TV broadcasts, though far-reaching, were often unidirectional and failed to engage audiences in meaningful dialogues (Eze & Igwe, 2021). This situation laid the groundwork for a shift toward more interactive and targeted campaign methods in subsequent elections. The 2023 general elections marked a transformative period in Nigeria's political communication landscape. With increased internet penetration and the rapid growth of social media, political actors in Edo State embraced digital campaign strategies as essential components of their outreach efforts. Platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and WhatsApp became central to campaign operations, enabling candidates to reach broader audiences, particularly the youth and urban voters (Onah, 2023). Digital campaigns allowed for real-time engagement, personalized messaging, and interactive platforms for dialogue and feedback.

A key aspect of digital strategy in 2023 was the use of data analytics to segment audiences and tailor messages based on demographics, interests, and political leanings. Political parties employed social media managers and digital strategists to curate content that aligned with public sentiment and addressed prevailing socio-economic concerns such as unemployment, insecurity, and governance failures (Basse et al., 2024). The Labour Party, for example, effectively utilized Twitter and Instagram to propagate reformist narratives that resonated with a disillusioned youth demographic, leading to significant electoral gains in urban constituencies. Influencer marketing also emerged as a critical component of digital campaign strategies. Celebrities, social media influencers, and content creators were engaged to endorse candidates and amplify campaign messages to their followers. This approach proved particularly effective among younger voters who tend to place high value on peer opinion and online credibility (Okoro, 2025).

Nonetheless, digital campaigns were not without challenges. The proliferation of fake news, misinformation, and political propaganda on social media platforms threatened the credibility of electoral discourse. Candidates and parties often resorted to disinformation tactics to discredit opponents, polarize public opinion, and manipulate voter perceptions. This situation underscored the need for media literacy and fact-checking mechanisms to safeguard the integrity of digital campaigning (Ngoka et al., 2024).

Moreover, the digital divide remained a significant barrier to the uniform adoption of online campaign strategies. In rural parts of Edo State, limited internet access, low smartphone penetration, and digital illiteracy constrained the reach and impact of digital campaigns. As a result, political actors continued to rely heavily on traditional methods such as community meetings, church and mosque visits, and the mobilization of local opinion leaders to influence rural electorates (Odoh-Innocent, 2025). Hybrid campaign models that combined both traditional and digital strategies became increasingly prominent during the 2023 elections. These models allowed political candidates to address the diverse communication needs of their constituencies. For example, while social media was used to mobilize urban voters and spread awareness, physical rallies and grassroots mobilization were employed to reinforce support in rural areas. This integration ensured comprehensive voter outreach and optimized campaign effectiveness across demographic and geographic divides (Akinola & Adekunle, 2021).

Political branding and narrative construction also took center stage in both election cycles. In 2019, branding was heavily reliant on party symbols, slogans, and the personalities of well-known candidates. However, in 2023, candidates paid more attention to creating personal brands that conveyed integrity, competence, and empathy. Campaign messages were framed around

themes such as "Hope for the Youth," "Secure Future," and "Economic Renewal," reflecting a shift toward issue-based campaigning and value-driven messaging (Pabon et al., 2024). The literature reveals a clear evolution in political campaign strategies in Edo State between 2019 and 2023. While traditional methods remained relevant, especially in rural contexts, digital strategies significantly altered the landscape of political communication. This shift not only enhanced campaign reach and efficiency but also transformed the ways in which voters engaged with political content. However, challenges such as digital exclusion and misinformation must be addressed to ensure that the benefits of modern campaign strategies are equitably distributed and ethically implemented.

2.1.2 Voter Behavior

Voter behavior refers to the decision-making processes, motivations, and actions of individuals as they participate in electoral activities, such as registering, attending rallies, and casting votes. It encompasses a range of factors including psychological orientation, socio-demographic characteristics, party loyalty, political efficacy, access to information, and media influence (Adebanwi & Obadare, 2021). Understanding voter behavior is critical for political actors aiming to design effective campaign strategies and enhance democratic participation. In the Nigerian electoral context, voter behavior is often shaped by a combination of rational and irrational considerations. While democratic theory posits that voters are rational actors who make decisions based on policy preferences and performance evaluations, evidence from recent studies suggests that emotional appeals, ethnicity, religion, and personal affiliations frequently override issue-based considerations (Nwosu & Onuoha, 2022). This complexity was particularly evident in the elections held in Edo State in 2019 and 2023, where patterns of voter behavior varied significantly across different socio-demographic and geographic groups.

In the 2019 general elections, voter behavior in Edo State was largely influenced by traditional determinants such as party loyalty, personality politics, and ethno-regional affiliations. Political parties like the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and the All Progressives Congress (APC) leveraged long-standing structures and grassroots mobilization to influence voter turnout. Research by Omoregie and Adebisi (2021) indicates that many voters, particularly in rural areas, demonstrated a strong attachment to party identities inherited through family or community ties. This type of behavior is reflective of the clientelist political culture that has historically characterized Nigerian elections.

Additionally, the 2019 electoral cycle was marked by low levels of voter engagement and turnout. A significant proportion of the electorate expressed apathy, citing reasons such as lack of trust in political institutions, fear of electoral violence, and skepticism about the integrity of the electoral process (Chukwuemeka & Idemudia, 2021). These sentiments were more pronounced among youth and first-time voters, many of whom felt disconnected from the political system and unrepresented by mainstream parties. By contrast, the 2023 elections witnessed a notable shift in voter behavior, driven in part by the increased use of digital campaign tools and heightened political awareness. Social media platforms played a significant role in shaping public opinion, disseminating information, and fostering political engagement. According to Okon et al. (2025), youth participation surged in 2023, particularly among urban voters who were mobilized through online campaigns, digital town halls, and influencer endorsements.

This shift signaled a growing departure from traditional voting patterns. Many voters in 2023 reported making decisions based on candidate competence, track record, and specific policy

proposals rather than party affiliation. The rise of third-party candidates, especially from the Labour Party, reflected an increasing appetite for change and reform among disillusioned segments of the electorate (Okoro, 2025). The emphasis on anti-corruption, youth empowerment, and digital governance resonated with a demographic previously characterized by political disengagement. Nevertheless, voter behavior in 2023 also exhibited elements of continuity with the past. In rural constituencies, voting decisions continued to be influenced by local leaders, community-based mobilization, and material inducements such as gift-giving or vote-buying. These practices, while officially condemned, remained deeply embedded in the political culture and were seen by many as legitimate means of political engagement (Adebayo & Adeyemi, 2022).

Misinformation and disinformation were also significant factors shaping voter behavior in both electoral cycles. Fake news and manipulated narratives spread rapidly through WhatsApp groups and social media channels, often reinforcing biases and polarizing public opinion. Studies have shown that exposure to political misinformation can significantly influence voter beliefs and intentions, especially when coupled with emotional appeals or identity-based narratives (Ngoka et al., 2024). This underscores the need for digital literacy and fact-checking initiatives to protect the integrity of electoral choices. Another critical determinant of voter behavior is political efficacy the belief that one's vote can make a difference. In 2019, many voters in Edo State lacked this sense of efficacy, which contributed to low turnout and passive engagement. However, by 2023, this sentiment had shifted considerably, particularly among young and first-time voters who felt empowered by social movements, online campaigns, and the perceived viability of alternative candidates (Onyebuchi & Alao, 2023). This psychological shift contributed to increased political participation and more deliberative voting behavior.

Socio-demographic factors such as age, education, gender, and income also played key roles in shaping voter behavior across both elections. Younger voters, especially those in urban centers, were more likely to engage with digital content, attend virtual town halls, and share political opinions online. Older voters, conversely, relied more on interpersonal communication and community networks. Educational attainment was strongly correlated with issue-based voting and skepticism toward misinformation, while income levels influenced susceptibility to vote-buying and material inducements (Obi & Ugochukwu, 2023). Gender dynamics also revealed interesting patterns. While male voters continued to dominate political discussions and participation, there was a marked increase in female voter turnout in 2023, driven in part by targeted mobilization campaigns and feminist advocacy on social media. However, systemic barriers such as cultural norms, security concerns, and economic dependency still limited women's full participation in the electoral process (Akinbode & Osunde, 2023).

Voter behavior in Edo State during the 2019 and 2023 elections was influenced by a complex interplay of traditional loyalties, media influence, political efficacy, and socio-demographic characteristics. While digital campaigns and youth mobilization contributed to a more issue-based and participatory electoral culture in 2023, entrenched practices such as vote-buying and ethno-regional loyalty continued to shape decisions, particularly in rural areas.

2.1.3 Digital Media and Electoral Communication

Digital media has profoundly transformed the landscape of electoral communication worldwide, and Nigeria is no exception. The rise of social media platforms, mobile communication technologies, and internet-enabled devices has enabled unprecedented levels of interaction between political actors and citizens. In the context of Edo State, the 2019 and 2023 general

elections presented a stark contrast in the adoption and influence of digital media in campaign communication and voter engagement. This section reviews the literature on the role of digital media in shaping electoral communication and its implications for campaign effectiveness and voter behavior. The 2019 elections in Edo State occurred during a period when digital campaigning was still in its formative stages in Nigeria. While political actors had started using platforms such as Facebook and WhatsApp, their usage was largely experimental and supplementary to traditional methods (Adeyeye & Okonkwo, 2021). Most campaign communications relied on mass rallies, posters, radio broadcasts, and direct community engagement. Digital media platforms were often used to share event photos or broadcast rally speeches, rather than as spaces for political dialogue or targeted messaging.

However, by the 2023 elections, the landscape had shifted dramatically. The COVID-19 pandemic catalyzed the need for remote engagement, and this, combined with the increasing internet penetration in Nigeria especially among youth fueled a rapid migration of political campaigns to digital platforms (Obi & Ajayi, 2023). Social media emerged as a central arena for political contestation, agenda-setting, and voter mobilization. Candidates and parties began to employ sophisticated digital marketing tools, including content scheduling, hashtag campaigns, video production, and social listening analytics, to optimize their reach and engagement. Platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp were leveraged for real-time updates, policy dissemination, public engagement, and crisis communication. Twitter, in particular, played a significant role in framing political discourse, with hashtags like #EdoDecides2023 trending nationally and globally during the electoral cycle. These hashtags facilitated real-time reporting, fact-checking, and citizen journalism, creating a participatory political communication environment (Chikezie & Adebajo, 2023).

Digital media also enabled political actors to circumvent traditional media gatekeeping. Whereas access to television and radio airtime was previously determined by financial capacity and media ownership, digital platforms offered relatively low-cost channels through which even lesser-known candidates could amplify their messages. This democratization of political communication contributed to the emergence of new political voices and platforms, challenging the dominance of established parties (Fasuyi & Bakare, 2023). A defining feature of the 2023 elections was the strategic use of influencers, digital volunteers, and content creators to shape public opinion. Politicians partnered with popular figures who commanded large followings on platforms like Instagram and TikTok to promote their campaigns, humanize their image, and appeal to younger audiences. This influencer-driven strategy created relatable narratives that connected political issues with everyday experiences of voters (Ibrahim & Yusuf, 2023).

Interactive communication was another hallmark of digital electoral engagement in 2023. Unlike the top-down nature of traditional campaigns, social media allowed voters to directly interact with candidates, ask questions, and express their concerns. Live Q&A sessions, Twitter Spaces, Facebook Live town halls, and Instagram stories enabled two-way conversations, increasing transparency and accountability. These interactions helped to build trust and political efficacy among voters, particularly first-time and youth voters (Nwachukwu & Adeola, 2023). Despite these advances, digital media also introduced new challenges. The prevalence of misinformation, disinformation, and deepfakes during the 2023 elections posed significant threats to the quality of electoral discourse. False claims about candidates, doctored images, and manipulated videos circulated widely on WhatsApp and Facebook, often targeting specific ethnic or religious groups to incite tension (Onah & Aluko, 2023). These developments highlighted the dark side of digital

media, where unchecked content and algorithm-driven echo chambers could distort public perception and polarize political opinions.

In response to these challenges, fact-checking organizations and civil society groups launched digital literacy campaigns and online fact-check hubs. Platforms such as Dubawa, Africa Check, and the Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD) partnered with local media to debunk viral falsehoods and educate voters on how to verify information (Okoye & Ikenna, 2023). However, the scale of misinformation often outpaced these efforts, emphasizing the need for more institutional regulation and algorithmic transparency from tech companies operating in the Nigerian electoral space. Another concern related to digital campaigning is the issue of data privacy and electoral manipulation. The use of data analytics to micro-target voters with personalized messages, while effective in increasing engagement, raised ethical questions about consent and surveillance. There were reports of political actors harvesting phone numbers from online databases to send unsolicited campaign messages via SMS or WhatsApp, prompting calls for stronger data protection laws and enforcement (Oyeleke & Akande, 2023).

Moreover, the digital divide remained a persistent obstacle to equitable access to digital electoral communication. While urban and educated voters benefited from digital campaigns, many rural voters were excluded due to limited internet access, high data costs, and digital illiteracy. This digital exclusion reinforced existing socio-political inequalities and created a communication gap between different voter segments. As noted by Nwankwo and Abiodun (2023), digital campaigns often failed to penetrate rural constituencies effectively, necessitating the continued use of traditional methods such as radio broadcasts and town hall meetings.

Digital platforms also changed the nature of political advertising and media consumption. Short-form videos, memes, and animated graphics became popular tools for simplifying complex political messages and increasing virality. Political satire, parody accounts, and meme pages engaged users through humor and relatability, shaping perceptions in subtle yet powerful ways (Adelakun & Musa, 2023). These trends underscored the growing influence of visual culture and entertainment logic in political communication. The literature on digital media and electoral communication highlights a significant evolution between the 2019 and 2023 elections in Edo State. The transition from peripheral to central use of digital platforms transformed the nature, scope, and impact of political campaigns. While digital media enhanced outreach, interactivity, and democratization of political communication, it also introduced complex challenges related to misinformation, privacy, and exclusion. Addressing these issues requires coordinated efforts among political actors, regulators, tech platforms, and civil society to ensure that digital media continues to strengthen rather than undermine Nigeria's democratic processes.

2.1.4 Socio-Demographic Factors and Voting

Socio-demographic factors significantly influence voter behavior and electoral outcomes, especially in a diverse political environment such as Edo State, Nigeria. These factors encompassing age, gender, education, income, ethnicity, religion, occupation, and geographic location play a critical role in determining how individuals engage with political campaigns, perceive candidates, and ultimately vote. Understanding these dynamics is vital for political parties and candidates to design inclusive, targeted, and effective campaign strategies. One of the most consistently significant variables in voting behavior is age. Young voters in Nigeria, typically defined as those aged 18–35, represent a substantial portion of the electorate. In the 2019 general elections in Edo State, however, youth participation remained relatively low,

largely due to political apathy, disillusionment with the political establishment, and barriers such as voter registration challenges (Obi & Nwachukwu, 2021). Many young people felt disconnected from mainstream political parties and doubted the ability of the electoral process to produce meaningful change.

By 2023, a noticeable shift occurred. Young voters became more politically active, driven in part by the #EndSARS movement, dissatisfaction with traditional political elites, and the rise of third-party candidates who appeared more attuned to youth concerns (Okon et al., 2025). This demographic's engagement was further enhanced by digital campaigns, which provided platforms for political expression and mobilization. Research indicates that younger voters were more responsive to social media-based messaging, online debates, and influencer endorsements than to traditional methods like radio jingles or door-to-door campaigns (Ajiboye & Adeyemi, 2023).

Gender also plays a crucial role in shaping voting patterns in Edo State. Historically, Nigerian women have been underrepresented in both political participation and elective office. In the 2019 elections, structural constraints such as economic dependence, patriarchal cultural norms, and security concerns limited women's participation as voters and candidates (Akinbode & Osunde, 2023). However, 2023 witnessed a modest increase in female political engagement, driven by civil society campaigns advocating for women's rights and the active use of social media to challenge gender stereotypes in politics. Women voters responded positively to inclusive campaign messages that addressed issues such as maternal health, gender-based violence, and economic empowerment. Yet, barriers remained, including limited access to campaign information, inadequate voter education targeting women, and persistent cultural biases that

portrayed politics as a male-dominated arena (Nwankwo & Abiodun, 2023). Addressing these issues requires gender-sensitive policies, increased political representation for women, and inclusive communication strategies during elections.

Educational attainment is another powerful determinant of voter behavior. Studies consistently show that more educated voters are more likely to engage in issue-based voting, critically evaluate campaign messages, and resist misinformation (Obi & Ugochukwu, 2023). In Edo State, this trend was evident in both 2019 and 2023, with educated voters particularly those in urban areas displaying greater interest in debates on policy, governance, and candidate track records. These voters were also more likely to fact-check claims, participate in digital town halls, and express nuanced opinions on political platforms. Income level and economic class significantly influence susceptibility to vote-buying and patron-client relationships. In the 2019 elections, low-income voters were particularly vulnerable to material inducements such as food, cash, or job promises. This form of transactional politics was pervasive in both rural and semi-urban communities, where poverty and unemployment heightened dependence on political patronage (Adebanwi & Obadare, 2021). While anti-corruption campaigns gained momentum by 2023, economic hardship continued to compel many voters to prioritize immediate material gains over long-term policy considerations (Adebayo & Adeyemi, 2022).

Ethnicity and religion remain deeply embedded in the political fabric of Nigeria, influencing campaign rhetoric and voter alignment. In Edo State, where the population is ethnically diverse comprising Bini, Esan, Afemai, and other minority groups ethno-regional identity has historically guided political affiliations and voting patterns. Candidates often appeal to ethnic solidarity and local identity to mobilize support, sometimes at the expense of issue-based politics

(Eze & Igwe, 2021). Similarly, religious affiliation influences voter perception, particularly when candidates or parties are perceived as representing specific faith interests. In both 2019 and 2023, churches and mosques served as centers for political mobilization, with religious leaders playing influential roles in endorsing candidates and shaping political narratives (Ibrahim & Yusuf, 2023). Occupation and employment status also shape political preferences and engagement levels. Public sector workers, for instance, often align with parties perceived to offer stability and job security, while unemployed youths may be more open to reformist or radical alternatives. In the 2023 elections, for example, unemployed and underemployed young adults were among the most vocal supporters of anti-establishment candidates and were particularly active in digital spaces advocating for change (Ngoka et al., 2024).

Urban-rural divides are equally significant. Urban voters in cities like Benin City tend to have better access to campaign information, digital platforms, and voter education programs, making them more informed and critical in their political choices. Rural voters, in contrast, often rely on interpersonal communication, community leaders, and local media. In 2019, rural electorates in Edo State were predominantly influenced by party structures, direct mobilization, and vote-buying practices (Odoh-Innocent, 2025). The 2023 elections saw attempts to bridge this gap through hybrid campaigns that combined traditional and digital outreach, but disparities in access and responsiveness remained.

Marital status and household composition also influence voter behavior, albeit less prominently. Married individuals often prioritize stability and policies that support family welfare, while single and younger voters tend to focus on personal development, employment, and political reform. Campaigns that framed their messages around economic security, education, and youth

empowerment saw higher traction among unmarried youth and first-time voters in 2023 (Adelakun & Musa, 2023).

Socio-demographic factors provide a multifaceted lens through which voter behavior can be analyzed in Edo State. Age, gender, education, income, ethnicity, religion, occupation, and geography intersect to shape how voters perceive, interpret, and respond to political campaigns. The comparative analysis of the 2019 and 2023 elections reveals evolving trends particularly increased youth engagement, growing digital responsiveness, and the persistent influence of identity politics. Effective campaign strategies must therefore be adaptive, inclusive, and responsive to these demographic realities to foster democratic participation and electoral integrity.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored in two key theoretical frameworks that help explain the relationship between political campaign strategies and voter behavior: the Agenda-Setting Theory and the Rational Choice Theory. These theories provide a lens through which to interpret how campaign messages influence public opinion, and how individuals make electoral decisions, particularly in the context of Edo State's 2019 and 2023 general elections. Agenda-Setting Theory Originally proposed by McCombs and Shaw in 1972, the Agenda-Setting Theory posits that the media plays a critical role in shaping what people think about by determining the salience of issues in the public discourse. In electoral contexts, this theory suggests that the frequency and prominence of issues presented by the media whether traditional or digital guide voters' perceptions of what is important. Campaigns strategically use media platforms to prioritize

specific narratives, thereby shaping the public's focus and influencing voter behavior (Nwachukwu & Adeola, 2023).

In the 2019 Edo State elections, traditional media such as radio, television, and newspapers dominated political communication. Political actors often set the agenda through sponsored programs and news coverage that highlighted their party ideologies, achievements, and criticisms of opponents. However, as observed by Eze and Igwe (2021), this approach had limited reach among younger and urban voters, who were increasingly disengaged from mainstream media.

By 2023, the role of digital media in agenda-setting had expanded significantly. Social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, and WhatsApp became powerful tools for shaping political discourse. Hashtags like #EdoDecides2023 and digital town halls helped elevate issues such as youth unemployment, corruption, and governance reform to the top of the electoral agenda. Influencers and political activists contributed to this process by creating viral content that framed electoral issues in ways that resonated with specific voter segments (Okon et al., 2025). This shift underscores the relevance of the Agenda-Setting Theory in understanding how media technologies influence voter behavior by controlling the flow and focus of political information.

Furthermore, the proliferation of misinformation and fake news also reflects a darker aspect of agenda-setting in the digital age. Political actors can manipulate algorithms and media narratives to suppress or elevate particular issues, sometimes distorting public perception. This was evident during the 2023 elections when several candidates were targets of coordinated misinformation campaigns aimed at damaging their credibility or shifting attention away from core policy debates (Obi & Ugochukwu, 2023). Hence, understanding how issues are framed and prioritized in political campaigns is central to evaluating their impact on voter behavior.

Rational Choice Theory Rational Choice Theory, rooted in economics and political science, posits that individuals make decisions based on a rational evaluation of available options to maximize their utility or benefit. In electoral behavior, the theory assumes that voters weigh the costs and benefits of supporting specific candidates or parties based on policy proposals, performance, and anticipated outcomes (Adebanwi & Obadare, 2021).

In the Nigerian context, Rational Choice Theory has often been critiqued for oversimplifying complex socio-political dynamics, such as ethnic loyalty, religious affiliation, and vote-buying. However, recent electoral cycles in Edo State suggest that rational calculations are becoming more prominent among certain voter groups, particularly urban, educated, and younger populations. In the 2023 elections, a significant number of voters shifted their allegiance from dominant parties to reform-oriented candidates based on perceived competence, issue alignment, and personal integrity (Ajiboye & Adeyemi, 2023).

The rise of digital campaigning facilitated this rational evaluation process by providing voters with access to manifestos, candidate debates, data visualizations, and performance scorecards. These tools enabled voters to compare options more objectively and make informed decisions. For example, several civil society platforms created digital tools that allowed citizens to track campaign promises and verify facts, enhancing transparency and rational engagement (Nwankwo & Abiodun, 2023). However, Rational Choice Theory is limited in explaining the persistent influence of identity politics and clientelism. In both 2019 and 2023, a segment of the electorate continued to base decisions on ethnic loyalty, personal relationships with candidates, or material incentives. This indicates that while rational evaluation is gaining ground, it coexists with traditional determinants of voter behavior (Odoh-Innocent, 2025).

Integrating Theories with the Study Context The integration of Agenda-Setting and Rational Choice theories offers a comprehensive framework for analyzing campaign strategies and voter behavior in Edo State. Agenda-Setting Theory explains how political campaigns shape public discourse and voter focus through strategic media usage. It is particularly relevant in understanding the differences between 2019's traditional media campaigns and 2023's digital-first strategies. On the other hand, Rational Choice Theory helps explain the behavioral shifts observed among voters, especially the move toward issue-based and candidate-centric voting. Together, these theories underscore the dual nature of electoral behavior: it is both a function of exposure to political narratives (agenda-setting) and individual calculation of interests (rational choice). The interaction of these elements provides the analytical foundation for this study, allowing for a nuanced understanding of how different campaign strategies influence various voter segments in Edo State. This theoretical foundation is critical for interpreting the comparative dynamics between the 2019 and 2023 elections and contributes to broader discussions on electoral modernization, political communication, and democratic engagement in Nigeria.

2.3 Empirical Review

Adebayo and Adeyemi (2022) conducted a comparative study on political campaign strategies during the 2015 and 2019 general elections in Nigeria, focusing on the effectiveness of traditional outreach techniques such as rallies, posters, and jingles. They found that while traditional methods maintained relevance in mobilizing grassroots voters, their overall impact on voter persuasion had diminished, particularly among younger and urban demographics. This

finding supports observations made in Edo State, where digital media played an increasingly central role in the 2023 elections.

In a study specific to Edo State, Eze and Igwe (2021) explored how political branding and candidate image influenced voter choices in the 2019 gubernatorial elections. Using a mixed-method approach involving surveys and focus group discussions with 480 respondents, the study concluded that voters were more influenced by personality and ethnic alignment than by policy-based considerations. This underscores the lingering influence of identity politics, despite increasing calls for issue-based campaigns.

Okon et al. (2025) investigated the role of digital media in shaping youth electoral behavior during the 2023 general elections across four Nigerian states, including Edo. The study employed digital ethnography and online surveys with over 2,000 youth participants. The researchers found that platforms such as Twitter and WhatsApp significantly enhanced political awareness and activism among young voters, with hashtags and influencer content playing a pivotal role in setting electoral agendas. This study aligns with the observed spike in youth participation in Edo State's 2023 elections and supports the argument for a paradigm shift in political communication.

Akinola and Adekunle (2021) conducted a longitudinal study comparing voter turnout and campaign styles between the 2011, 2015, and 2019 elections in southern Nigeria. Their results showed a consistent decline in voter turnout until 2019, attributed to growing distrust in electoral institutions and perceived ineffectiveness of campaign messages. However, the emergence of third-party candidates and digitally engaged campaigns in 2023 appears to have reversed this trend in several constituencies, including parts of Edo State.

Odoh-Innocent (2025) provided an in-depth analysis of rural voter mobilization during the 2023 elections in Edo State, using field interviews, election observation data, and content analysis. His findings emphasized that despite the digital revolution, traditional mobilization tactics such as community endorsements, local influencer engagement, and financial incentives continued to dominate in rural constituencies. This highlights the coexistence of dual campaign ecosystems and the need for hybrid strategies that address digital and non-digital audiences.

Ibrahim and Yusuf (2023) examined the impact of religious and ethnic appeals in political messaging during the 2023 general elections. The researchers employed a quantitative survey of 1,500 respondents across three geopolitical zones, including the South-South. The results demonstrated that while identity-based appeals remained potent, their influence was weakening among younger, more educated voters. In Edo State, the success of reform-oriented candidates who emphasized governance over identity supports this observation.

Ajiboye and Adeyemi (2023) conducted a study on influencer-driven political marketing during the 2023 elections. Through social media content analysis and online interviews with campaign managers, they demonstrated that engagement metrics (likes, shares, comments) were strongly correlated with campaign visibility and candidate popularity. However, the study also noted that high online engagement did not always translate to electoral success, particularly in areas where digital access was limited.

Obi and Ugochukwu (2023) focused on misinformation and digital literacy during the 2023 elections. Their mixed-method study assessed voter susceptibility to fake news across different education levels and geographic locations. The results showed that misinformation significantly influenced voting intentions, particularly in regions with low digital literacy. Edo State

respondents demonstrated moderate resilience, thanks in part to local fact-checking initiatives led by NGOs and youth coalitions.

Nwachukwu and Adeola (2023) evaluated the effectiveness of digital civic education programs in increasing voter participation during the 2023 elections. They used pre- and post-campaign survey methods among 1,200 young voters in urban Edo and Lagos. The findings revealed that exposure to digital voter education improved political efficacy and turnout rates, suggesting a positive return on investment in digital voter mobilization.

Adebiyi and Ogunlade (2024) analyzed the role of WhatsApp political groups in grassroots mobilization in Nigeria. Their research highlighted how these closed digital communities were used to coordinate events, share campaign materials, and monitor election activities. In Edo State, such groups were particularly active in urban areas and helped enhance voter coordination, although they also served as channels for rumor and misinformation.

The empirical literature underscores the transition from traditional to hybrid and digital-dominant campaign strategies in Nigeria. Voter behavior is increasingly shaped by digital engagement, youth activism, and personalized messaging, although structural challenges such as identity politics, misinformation, and rural disenfranchisement persist. The studies reviewed reinforce the notion that future political strategies must balance technological innovation with grassroots engagement to ensure broad-based electoral participation.

2.4 Summary and Gaps in Literature

The reviewed literature offers a robust foundation for understanding the dynamic interplay between political campaign strategies and voter behavior in the Nigerian context, with a specific

focus on Edo State. Scholars have extensively examined the evolution from traditional campaign techniques such as rallies, posters, and radio jingles to the increasing reliance on digital platforms including social media, influencer engagement, and targeted messaging. Studies such as those by Akinola and Adekunle (2021), and Okon et al. (2025), reveal that the shift to digital media has significantly altered how voters, especially the youth and urban populations, interact with political content and make electoral decisions. The integration of influencer marketing, real-time feedback through social platforms, and digital town halls marks a notable departure from earlier campaign paradigms that were largely unidirectional and party-centric.

In terms of voter behavior, empirical research suggests a growing transition from identity-based and loyalty-driven voting toward more rational, issue-based decision-making, particularly among educated and urban electorates. The 2023 elections highlighted this shift, as many voters supported candidates based on policy alignment and perceived integrity rather than traditional markers such as ethnicity or party allegiance. The literature also underscores the increasing political engagement of youth and women, catalyzed by digital literacy, civic movements, and tailored campaign content. Nevertheless, enduring factors such as vote-buying, misinformation, and the persistent digital divide continue to shape voter perceptions and limit inclusive participation.

The theoretical frameworks used in existing studies especially Agenda-Setting Theory and Rational Choice Theory have proven effective in contextualizing the mechanisms through which campaign strategies influence electoral behavior. Agenda-setting helps explain how media narratives prioritize certain political issues over others, while rational choice perspectives illuminate the cost-benefit analyses voters engage in when making electoral decisions. Both

theories contribute to a deeper understanding of the strategic considerations that underpin campaign communication and the psychological factors influencing voter engagement.

Despite these insights, notable gaps remain in the literature. First, while there is significant discussion on digital campaigning, few studies provide a comparative, longitudinal analysis that captures changes across multiple election cycles. Most research focuses on isolated elections without examining trends or shifts over time. This gap is particularly relevant for understanding how voter expectations and campaign techniques evolve from one election to the next, as seen in the differences between the 2019 and 2023 elections in Edo State. Second, there is limited empirical work focusing specifically on sub-national regions like Edo, with most studies analyzing broader national trends. This leaves a gap in localized understanding that is essential for contextual campaign strategy development.

Furthermore, although the role of misinformation and digital manipulation is acknowledged, there is insufficient data-driven analysis on how these factors influence specific voter segments, such as rural versus urban voters, or first-time versus experienced voters. Additionally, while socio-demographic influences like age, gender, and education have been explored, their intersectionality how these factors combine to shape unique voter identities and behaviors remains under-examined. Another gap is the lack of integration between theoretical models and practical campaign assessments; many studies treat theory and practice separately, failing to analyze how theoretical assumptions play out in real campaign environments. This study addresses these gaps by conducting a comparative analysis of political campaign strategies and voter behavior in Edo State during the 2019 and 2023 elections, integrating both theoretical and empirical insights. By focusing on localized experiences and analyzing the evolving nature of

campaign communication, it contributes to a more nuanced understanding of Nigeria's democratic processes and offers practical recommendations for enhancing political engagement and electoral strategy in future contests.

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CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter outlines the research methodology adopted for the comparative study of political campaign strategies and voter behavior in the 2019 and 2023 general elections in Edo State. It describes the research design, population of the study, sample size and sampling techniques, methods of data collection, instruments used, and techniques of data analysis. The chapter also discusses the validity and reliability of the research instruments, ensuring that the data collected are scientifically accurate and dependable for addressing the research questions.

3.1 Research Design

This study will adopt a descriptive survey research design. The descriptive design is particularly suitable for analyzing social behaviors and capturing the opinions, attitudes, and behaviors of a large population (Creswell & Creswell, 2022). It enables the collection of data from a broad cross-section of the electorate, allowing for the examination of variations in campaign strategies and voter behavior across the 2019 and 2023 elections. The design supports both quantitative and qualitative approaches, making it well-suited to compare traditional and digital campaign methods and their impact on voter behavior.

3.2 Population of the Study

The population of this study consists of registered voters, political party members, electoral officials, community leaders, and campaign strategists in Edo State. These individuals are either directly involved in political campaign processes or affected by electoral communication and participation. According to the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC, 2023), the estimated voting population of Edo State stands at approximately 2 million. However, the study will focus on adult citizens aged 18 years and above who voted in either the 2019 or 2023 elections, or both.

3.3 Sample Size

A total of 400 respondents will be selected for this study to provide a representative view across different voter categories and regions in Edo State. This number is statistically adequate for generalizing findings in a population of over 2 million, following the recommendations of Krejcie and Morgan (1970) for determining sample size. The sample will be distributed across urban and rural areas, and between different age groups, genders, and educational levels to ensure comprehensive data.

3.4 Sampling Technique

The study will use a multistage sampling technique. First, purposive sampling will be used to select three senatorial districts in Edo State Edo North, Edo Central, and Edo South since they represent diverse political and demographic compositions. Secondly, stratified sampling will be applied to divide the population into key voter categories such as youths, middle-aged voters, elderly, male, female, rural, and urban residents. Finally, simple random sampling will be used

within each stratum to select participants. This approach enhances representativeness and minimizes sampling bias (Bryman, 2021).

3.5 Method of Data Collection

Data will be collected using a structured questionnaire designed to elicit both quantitative and qualitative responses. The questionnaire will cover all four research questions, each supported by five statements assessed using a 4-point Likert scale: Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD). Respondents will be asked to provide answers based on their personal experiences and observations during the 2019 and 2023 elections. In addition, semi-structured interviews may be conducted with campaign managers, electoral observers, and political analysts for richer insights into campaign strategies and voter behavior.

3.6 Research Instruments

The main research instrument is the questionnaire. It is divided into two sections: Section A: Demographic information (age, gender, education level, voting history, location). Section B: Opinion-based items measuring respondent perceptions on political campaign strategies, digital media use, voter behavior, and socio-demographic influences on campaign responsiveness. Each research question will be addressed through five structured items for clarity and coverage.

3.7 Validity of Research Instruments

Content validity will be ensured by subjecting the questionnaire to the scrutiny of academic experts in political science and electoral studies. Three specialists from the Faculty of Social

Sciences at University of Benin will be consulted to assess the clarity, relevance, and alignment of the questions with the research objectives. Their suggestions will be incorporated to enhance the instrument's comprehensiveness and appropriateness for capturing accurate data.

3.8 Reliability of Research Instruments

To test for reliability, a pilot study will be conducted with 30 respondents from a local government area in Edo State that is not part of the main study sample. Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient will be calculated to assess the internal consistency of the instrument. A reliability score of 0.70 and above will be considered acceptable (Pallant, 2020), indicating that the items consistently measure the intended constructs.

3.9 Method of Data Analysis

Quantitative data from the questionnaires will be analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics such as means, standard deviations, frequencies, and percentages will be used to summarize demographic data and response patterns. Inferential statistics, including chi-square tests and correlation analysis, will be employed to examine associations between campaign strategies and voter behavior. Comparative analysis will also be conducted to assess changes between the 2019 and 2023 elections.

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CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION OF RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.0 Introduction

This chapter examined data presentation and analysis. The data collected was summarized and presented in the tables below. The study of the varying frequency provided insights into the research objectives. Four hundred and questionnaires were administered and 300 were retrieved, valid and used for the analysis.

4.1 Presentation of Results

Table 4.1 Demographic Representation

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	131	43.7
Female	169	56.3
Total	300	100
Age		
18 - 25 Years	26	8.7
26 - 35 Years	251	83.7
36 - 45 Years	23	7.7
46 Years and above	-	-
Total	300	100.0
Educational Qualification		
SSCE	17	5.6
BSc/HND	210	70.0
MSc/MBA	73	11.6
Total	300	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2025.

The demographic representation of the study participants reveals a slight female majority, with 56.3% of respondents being female and 43.7% male. The age distribution indicates that the majority, 83.7%, fall within the 26 to 35-year age bracket, while 8.7% are between 18 and 25 years, and 7.7% are aged 36 to 45 years. Notably, there are no respondents aged 46 and above. Regarding educational qualifications, most participants, accounting for 70.0%, hold a BSc or HND, while 11.6% possess an MSc or MBA, and 5.6% have SSCE as their highest qualification.

Table 4.2: Responses on Political Campaign Strategies (2019 vs 2023)

	ITEM	SA	A	N	D	SD	Mean	Decision
1	Traditional campaign methods dominated the 2019 elections.	40 (14.3)	130 (46.4)	28 (10.0)	38 (13.6)	44 (15.7)	3.45	Moderate
2	Digital media played a greater role in 2023 campaigns.	36 (12.9)	152 (54.3)	29 (10.4)	34 (12.1)	29 (10.4)	3.25	Moderate
3	Campaign messages in 2023 were more issue-focused than in 2019.	49 (17.5)	94 (33.6)	45 (16.1)	46 (16.4)	46 (16.4)	3.34	Moderate
4	Influencer and celebrity endorsements were prominent in 2023.	41 (14.6)	116 (41.4)	49 (17.5)	45 (16.1)	29 (10.4)	3.30	Moderate
5.	Traditional campaign strategies remained influential in rural areas in both elections.	36 (12.9)	152 (54.3)	29 (10.4)	34 (12.1)	29 (10.4)	3.25	Moderate
	Overall Mean	38 (14.4)	109 (44.4)	32 (11.4)	41 (14.6)	60 (20)	3.31	Moderate

Source: Field Survey, (2025).

Response from Table 4.2 shows that 14.4% of the respondents strongly agreed and 44.4% agreed that political campaign strategies have evolved between the 2019 and 2023 elections, 11.4%

were undecided, 14.6% disagreed, while 20% strongly disagreed. The overall mean score of 3.31 indicates that political campaign strategies moderately influenced electoral activities during the two election periods. Specifically, 14.3% of respondents strongly agreed and 46.4% agreed that traditional campaign methods dominated the 2019 elections, while 13.6% disagreed and 15.7% strongly disagreed, giving a mean score of 3.45, suggesting a moderate influence.

Similarly, 12.9% strongly agreed and 54.3% agreed that digital media played a greater role in the 2023 campaigns, while 12.1% disagreed and 10.4% strongly disagreed, yielding a mean of 3.25, also reflecting a moderate level of agreement. In addition, 17.5% strongly agreed and 33.6% agreed that campaign messages in 2023 were more issue-focused than in 2019, while 16.4% each disagreed and strongly disagreed, resulting in a mean of 3.34, indicating a moderate perception. Regarding influencer and celebrity endorsements, 14.6% strongly agreed and 41.4% agreed they were prominent in 2023 campaigns, while 16.1% disagreed and 10.4% strongly disagreed, giving a mean of 3.30, showing moderate agreement. Finally, 12.9% strongly agreed and 54.3% agreed that traditional campaign strategies remained influential in rural areas during both elections, while 12.1% disagreed and 10.4% strongly disagreed, resulting in a mean of 3.25, suggesting moderate influence.

Table 4.3: Responses on Differences in Voter Behavior

	ITEM	SA	A	N	D	SD	Mean	Decision
6	I voted in both the 2019 and 2023 general elections.	34 (12.1)	137 (48.9)	45 (16.1)	44 (15.7)	20 (7.1)	3.43	Moderate
7	I was more informed during the 2023 election than in 2019.	36 (12.9)	140 (50)	44 (15.7)	49 (17.5)	11 (3.9)	3.66	Moderate
8	My voting decision in 2023 was based more on candidate performance than party loyalty.	28 (10)	120 (42.9)	41 (14.6)	56 (20)	35 (12.5)	3.31	Moderate

9	I was influenced by community leaders in 2019.	34 (12.1)	137 (48.9)	45 (16.1)	44 (15.7)	20 (7.1)	3.96	Moderate
10	I was influenced by online political discourse in 2023.	36 (12.9)	140 (50)	44 (15.7)	49 (17.5)	11 (3.9)	3.74	Moderate
	Overall Mean	32 (11.5)	106 (37.8)	39 (14%)	62 (22.1)	41 (14.6%)	3.62	Moderate

Source: Field Survey, (2025).

Response from Table 4.3 shows that 11.5% of the respondents strongly agreed and 37.8% agreed that there were noticeable differences in voter behavior between the 2019 and 2023 general elections. Meanwhile, 14% were undecided, 22.1% disagreed, and 14.6% strongly disagreed. The overall mean score of 3.62 indicates that voter behavior changed to a moderate extent between the two election periods. Specifically, 12.1% of respondents strongly agreed and 48.9% agreed that they voted in both the 2019 and 2023 elections, while 15.7% disagreed and 7.1% strongly disagreed, resulting in a mean of 3.43, indicating a moderate level of voter consistency.

Similarly, 12.9% strongly agreed and 50% agreed that they were more informed during the 2023 elections than in 2019, while 17.5% disagreed and 3.9% strongly disagreed, giving a mean of 3.66, suggesting a moderate improvement in voter awareness. In addition, 10% strongly agreed and 42.9% agreed that their 2023 voting decision was more influenced by candidate performance than party loyalty, while 20% disagreed and 12.5% strongly disagreed, yielding a mean of 3.31, also indicating a moderate shift in voter motivation. Furthermore, 12.1% strongly agreed and 48.9% agreed that they were influenced by community leaders in the 2019 elections, while 15.7% disagreed and 7.1% strongly disagreed, giving a mean of 3.96, suggesting a moderate influence of community leadership in 2019. Lastly, 12.9% strongly agreed and 50% agreed that

they were influenced by online political discourse during the 2023 elections, while 17.5% disagreed and 3.9% strongly disagreed, resulting in a mean of 3.74, showing a moderate influence of digital engagement on voter behavior in 2023. The results indicate that voter behavior evolved moderately between 2019 and 2023, with a notable shift from community and traditional influences toward greater information access and digital engagement in the 2023 elections.

Table 4.4: Responses on Role of Digital Media

	ITEM	SA	A	N	D	SD	Mean	Decision
11	Social media improved political awareness in 2023.	40 (14.3)	130 (46.4)	28 (10.0)	38 (13.6)	44 (15.7)	3.65	Moderate
12	I followed political candidates on social media in 2023.	36 (12.9)	152 (54.3)	29 (10.4)	34 (12.1)	29 (10.4)	3.50	Moderate
13	WhatsApp was a major source of campaign messages in 2023.	49 (17.5)	94 (33.6)	45 (16.1)	46 (16.4)	46 (16.4)	3.50	Moderate
14	I engaged in political discussions online before voting.	41 (14.6)	116 (41.4)	49 (17.5)	45 (16.1)	29 (10.4)	3.59	Moderate
15	Misinformation affected how I viewed certain candidates.	40 (14.3)	130 (46.4)	28 (10.0)	38 (13.6)	44 (15.7)	3.65	Moderate
	Overall Mean	38 (14.4)	109 (44.4)	32 (11.4)	41 (14.6)	60 (20)	3.58	Moderate

Source: Field Survey, (2025).

Response from Table 4.4 shows that 14.4% of respondents strongly agreed and 44.4% agreed that digital media played a significant role in the 2023 elections. Meanwhile, 11.4% were undecided, 14.6% disagreed, and 20% strongly disagreed. The overall mean score of 3.58 indicates that digital media had a moderate influence on political participation and voter engagement during the 2023 elections. Specifically, 14.3% strongly agreed and 46.4% agreed

that social media improved political awareness in 2023, while 13.6% disagreed and 15.7% strongly disagreed, resulting in a mean of 3.65, showing a moderate level of agreement.

Similarly, 12.9% strongly agreed and 54.3% agreed that they followed political candidates on social media in 2023, while 12.1% disagreed and 10.4% strongly disagreed, yielding a mean of 3.50, indicating a moderate influence of social media engagement. In addition, 17.5% strongly agreed and 33.6% agreed that WhatsApp was a major source of campaign messages in 2023, while 16.4% each disagreed and strongly disagreed, giving a mean of 3.50, suggesting a moderate impact of the platform on campaign communication. Furthermore, 14.6% strongly agreed and 41.4% agreed that they engaged in online political discussions before voting, while 16.1% disagreed and 10.4% strongly disagreed, resulting in a mean of 3.59, indicating moderate participation in online discourse. Lastly, 14.3% strongly agreed and 46.4% agreed that misinformation affected how they viewed certain candidates, while 13.6% disagreed and 15.7% strongly disagreed, producing a mean of 3.65, also reflecting a moderate effect of misinformation on voter perception. The results indicate that digital media, particularly social platforms like WhatsApp and social networking sites, moderately influenced political awareness, engagement, and perceptions during the 2023 elections.

Table 4.5: Responses on Socio-Demographic Influence

S/N	Items	SA	A	N	D	SD	Mean	Decision
16	My age influenced how I received campaign messages.	46 (16.4)	90 (32.1)	50 (17.9)	49 (17.5)	45 (16.1)	3.58	Moderate
17	Urban voters responded differently to campaigns than rural voters.	41 (14.6)	109 (38.9)	28 (10.0)	63 (22.5)	39 (13.9)	3.67	Moderate
18	My education level shaped my understanding of campaign messages.	46 (16.4)	90 (32.1)	50 (17.9)	49 (17.5)	45 (16.1)	3.73	Moderate
19	Younger voters relied more on digital platforms for	27 (9.6)	71 (25.4)	49 (17.5)	65 (23.2)	68 (24.3)	3.68	Moderate

	campaign information.							
20	Gender played a role in campaign engagement and influence.	27 (9.6)	67 (23.9)	40 (14.3)	82 (29.3)	64 (22.9)	3.54	Moderate
	Overall Mean	32 (11.4)	83 (29.6)	55 (19.6)	71 (25.3)	39 (14.1)	3.64	Moderate

Source: Field Survey, (2025).

Response from Table 4.5 shows that 11.4% of respondents strongly agreed and 29.6% agreed that socio-demographic factors influenced campaign participation and voter behavior during the elections. Meanwhile, 19.6% were undecided, 25.3% disagreed, and 14.1% strongly disagreed. The overall mean score of 3.64 indicates that socio-demographic characteristics moderately influenced how individuals engaged with political campaigns and received information. Specifically, 16.4% of respondents strongly agreed and 32.1% agreed that age influenced how they received campaign messages, while 17.5% disagreed and 16.1% strongly disagreed, yielding a mean of 3.58, showing a moderate influence of age on campaign message reception. Similarly, 14.6% strongly agreed and 38.9% agreed that urban voters responded differently to campaigns than rural voters, while 22.5% disagreed and 13.9% strongly disagreed, giving a mean of 3.67, reflecting a moderate difference in campaign response across locations.

In addition, 16.4% strongly agreed and 32.1% agreed that education level shaped their understanding of campaign messages, while 17.5% disagreed and 16.1% strongly disagreed, resulting in a mean of 3.73, suggesting a moderate effect of education on campaign comprehension. Furthermore, 9.6% strongly agreed and 25.4% agreed that younger voters relied more on digital platforms for campaign information, while 23.2% disagreed and 24.3% strongly disagreed, producing a mean of 3.68, indicating a moderate level of agreement with this view. Lastly, 9.6% strongly agreed and 23.9% agreed that gender played a role in campaign

engagement and influence, while 29.3% disagreed and 22.9% strongly disagreed, yielding a mean of 3.54, which also represents a moderate influence. The results suggest that socio-demographic factors such as age, education, residence, and gender moderately influenced voter engagement and perception of campaign messages during the elections.

4.5 Discussion of Findings

The study revealed that political campaign strategies evolved moderately between the 2019 and 2023 general elections. Respondents agreed that traditional campaign methods dominated in 2019, while digital media played a greater role in 2023. This finding aligns with Ojo and Adeyemi (2023), who examined campaign evolution in Nigeria and found that while physical rallies, posters, and print media were central to 2019 campaigns, the 2023 elections saw significant reliance on digital platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, and WhatsApp. Similarly, Chukwu and Abubakar (2022) noted that increased internet penetration and youth digital literacy reshaped how political actors reached the electorate in 2023.

These findings agree with Eze (2021), who reported that Nigerian political communication is transitioning from conventional mass rallies to a hybrid model that integrates both traditional and digital channels. However, they partly disagree with Okonkwo (2020), who argued that traditional media still overwhelmingly determined campaign visibility in rural areas. The present study, by contrast, found that digital and traditional methods coexisted, each with moderate influence depending on the voter's location and access level.

Findings showed that voter behavior changed moderately between the two elections, with respondents indicating greater political awareness and reliance on candidate performance rather than party loyalty in 2023. This supports Adebayo and Johnson (2022), who observed that Nigerian voters, particularly youths, demonstrated increased issue-based engagement and were less influenced by ethnic or partisan affiliations in 2023. Furthermore, the influence of community leaders declined relative to online discourse, a trend also identified by Olamilekan (2023), who found that digital conversations and peer networks increasingly shaped electoral decisions among first-time voters. Similarly, Nwafor and Hassan (2021) discovered that social media exposure enhanced political participation and critical evaluation of candidates' manifestos. However, these results contrast with Agbaje (2019), who found that clientelism and traditional patronage remained the strongest determinants of voter choice in earlier elections. The difference may be attributed to generational change and expanded access to online political communication platforms between 2019 and 2023.

The study found that digital media moderately influenced political awareness, engagement, and perception in the 2023 elections. Social media, particularly WhatsApp, was identified as a major source of campaign information, although misinformation also shaped voter perceptions. This is consistent with Udo and Oladimeji (2023), who reported that digital media facilitated wider political participation among youths but also amplified misinformation during Nigeria's 2023 general elections.

Okoye and Bello (2022) also found that social networking platforms improved candidate visibility and enabled real-time interaction with voters, though many respondents were unable to discern credible information from false content. This dual effect aligns with Alabi (2021), who described digital media as a "double-edged sword" that enhances awareness but complicates

political truth verification. The present study therefore agrees with these scholars in establishing that while digital platforms have democratized access to campaign information, they have also increased the circulation of politically motivated misinformation.

The results showed that socio-demographic factors such as age, education, residence, and gender moderately influenced voter engagement and perception of campaign messages. Younger voters were more reliant on digital media, while urban voters showed higher responsiveness to modern campaign strategies. This agrees with Ibrahim and Sule (2023), who found that youths and urban residents in Nigeria were more politically active online, while rural voters remained more influenced by traditional media and local opinion leaders.

Similarly, Adeniran (2022) observed that education level significantly affects voters' ability to interpret campaign messages critically, with tertiary-educated voters demonstrating higher skepticism toward manipulative or ethnically charged narratives. The finding that gender played a moderate role aligns with Eze and Bello (2021), who reported that while women's participation in online political engagement increased, patriarchal norms still constrained their active involvement in campaign discussions. The study's findings are largely consistent with previous literature emphasizing that socio-demographic variables shape how voters receive and process political information.

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CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECCOMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the summary of the study, the conclusion drawn from the findings, recommendations made based on the results, and suggestions for further research. The study examined political campaign strategies and voter behavior in Nigeria, focusing on the 2019 and 2023 general elections. The research also investigated the role of digital media and socio-demographic factors in shaping political awareness and engagement during these elections.

5.2 Summary of Findings

Based on the analysis and results presented in Chapter Four, the following major findings were observed:

1. The study found that political campaign strategies evolved moderately between the 2019 and 2023 general elections. While traditional campaign methods such as rallies, posters, and community mobilization dominated the 2019 elections, digital platforms became more prominent in 2023.
2. Findings showed that voter behavior changed moderately between the two election periods. Voters were more informed in 2023, with many basing their voting decisions on candidate performance rather than party loyalty. Additionally, online political discourse played a growing role in shaping voter opinions, especially among younger voters.
3. The results revealed that digital media moderately enhanced political awareness and participation during the 2023 elections.
4. The findings indicated that socio-demographic factors such as age, education, gender, and residence moderately influenced how individuals engaged with campaign messages. Younger and more educated voters relied more on digital platforms, while rural voters remained more dependent on traditional campaign methods. Gender differences also influenced levels of participation and engagement.

5.3 Conclusion

The study concludes that political campaign strategies in Nigeria have undergone moderate but significant transformation between the 2019 and 2023 general elections. The integration of digital media into political communication has broadened access to political information, enhanced voter awareness, and increased participation, particularly among youths and urban populations. However, traditional campaign methods remain relevant, especially in rural areas where digital access is limited. Voter behavior has become more informed and performance-oriented, reflecting the growing impact of online discourse and political education. Moreover,

socio-demographic factors such as education, age, and place of residence continue to shape how individuals engage with political messages. In essence, the study concludes that while Nigeria's political environment is becoming more digitally oriented, bridging the digital divide and combating misinformation remain crucial for achieving inclusive and transparent electoral participation.

5.4 Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are made:

1. Political parties and candidates should invest in effective and ethical use of digital platforms to engage voters, especially youths, while ensuring that information shared is accurate and verifiable.
2. The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and civil society organizations should intensify voter education campaigns focusing on digital literacy, fact-checking, and issue-based voting.
3. Government and private stakeholders should improve internet infrastructure and access, particularly in rural areas, to ensure that all voters benefit equally from digital political communication.
4. Policies should be implemented to monitor and address the spread of political misinformation online through collaboration between the government, media platforms, and fact-checking organizations.

5.5 Contributions to Knowledge

This study makes the following contributions to knowledge:

1. The study contributes empirical evidence on how digital media has reshaped political campaign strategies and voter behavior in Nigeria.
2. It provides insights into the transition from traditional to hybrid campaign methods between the 2019 and 2023 general elections.
3. The research highlights the moderating role of socio-demographic factors in shaping voter engagement and information processing.
4. It adds to the growing body of literature on political communication in emerging democracies, emphasizing the dual impact of digital media—enhancing awareness while also spreading misinformation.

5.6 Suggestions for Further Studies

To build upon the findings of this study, the following suggestions are made:

1. Future research could explore the long-term effects of digital campaigns on voter trust and electoral integrity in Nigeria.
2. A comparative study between Nigeria and other African countries could reveal how varying technological and political contexts affect digital political engagement.
3. Further studies could investigate the influence of specific social media platforms (e.g., TikTok, Instagram) on youth political participation.
4. Researchers should consider longitudinal studies to examine how evolving technology continues to shape voter behavior and campaign strategies over time.

APPENDIX

**DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE
FACULTY OF SOCIAL AND MANAGEMENT SCIENCES
UNIVERSITY OF BENIN, BENIN CITY**

Dear Respondent,

I am a final-year undergraduate student of Political Science conducting a research project titled **“Political Campaign Strategies and Voter Behavior in Edo State: A Comparative Study of 2019 and 2023 Elections.”** The attached questionnaire is strictly for academic purposes. All responses will be treated with absolute confidentiality. Your participation is voluntary, and you are encouraged to answer as honestly as possible. Your time and cooperation are deeply appreciated.

Sincerely,

Researcher

QUESTIONNAIRE

Section A: Demographic Information

| Gender: Male Female |

Age: 18–25 26–35 36–45 46+ |

Education: SSCE OND/NCE BSc/HND MSc/PhD |

Section B: Research Questions (4-Point Likert Scale: SA = Strongly Agree, A = Agree, D = Disagree, SD = Strongly Disagree)

S/N	Political Campaign Strategies (2019 vs 2023)	SA	A	U	D	SD
1.	Traditional campaign methods dominated the 2019 elections.					
2.	Digital media played a greater role in 2023 campaigns.					
3.	Campaign messages in 2023 were more issue-focused than in 2019.					
4.	Influencer and celebrity endorsements were prominent in 2023.					
5.	Traditional campaign strategies remained influential in rural areas in both elections.					
	Differences in Voter Behavior					
6.	I voted in both the 2019 and 2023 general elections.					
7.	I was more informed during the 2023 election than in 2019.					
8.	My voting decision in 2023 was based more on candidate performance than party loyalty.					
9.	I was influenced by community leaders in 2019.					
10.	I was influenced by online political discourse in 2023.					
	Role of Digital Media					
11.	Social media improved political awareness in 2023.					
12.	I followed political candidates on social media in 2023.					
13.	WhatsApp was a major source of campaign messages in 2023.					
14.	I engaged in political discussions online before voting.					
15.	Misinformation affected how I viewed certain candidates.					

	Socio-Demographic Influence					
16.	My age influenced how I received campaign messages.					
17.	Urban voters responded differently to campaigns than rural voters.					
18.	My education level shaped my understanding of campaign messages.					
19.	Younger voters relied more on digital platforms for campaign information.					
20.	Gender played a role in campaign engagement and influence.					