ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND POLITICAL COMMUNICATION: TRUTHS AND HALF TRUTHS IN THE 2023 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

Chidi Nduka Aja
PG/MAPHD/20/92555
Dept of Mass Communication
University of Nigeria, Nsukka

Abstract
The 2023 Nigerian general election marked a significant departure from previous electoral processes due to the extensive integration of artificial intelligence (AI). This paper explores the role of AI in political communication during the presidential election, examining the types of political messages disseminated to voters. Drawing on qualitative analysis of relevant literature and publications, the study reveals the pervasive use of AI by political parties, candidates, and supporters to engage voters with tailored messages. Despite its potential to enhance democracy through increased accessibility, AI in political communication raises concerns regarding the dissemination of misinformation and manipulation of public opinion. The study highlights instances of AI-generated political communication, including deepfake videos, voice cloning, and fake news dissemination, which distort political discourse and diminish voter agency. Through the lens of the Diffusion of Innovations theory, the paper underscores the need for critical scrutiny of AI-mediated political communication to discern truths from half-truths. By identifying and analysing instances of misinformation and manipulation, this study contributes to a nuanced understanding of the impact of AI on democratic processes and public discourse.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, Political Communication, Misinformation, Deepfake, chatbots,

Introduction
Politics, at its core, revolves around communication – the exchange of ideas and opinions among members of society within political systems. This communication serves as a means for individuals, particularly politicians, to express their visions, influence public opinion, and ultimately secure electoral support (Nobre, 2021). In the pursuit of political power, candidates and parties employ various channels and media to disseminate their messages and shape public perceptions, thereby necessitating the automation of political communication.

The concept of artificial intelligence (AI) has ancient roots, with references to inanimate Objects imbued with intelligence found in ancient mythologies and historical engineering endeavours (Lewis, 2014). However, modern AI, as we understand it today – the simulation of human intelligence by machines, particularly computer systems – emerged formally in 1956, marked by a conference at Dartmouth College (Lewis, 2014). Despite early scepticism and periods of diminished interest known as "AI winters," the field experienced resurgence, fuelled by milestones such as IBM's Deep Blue defeating a chess grandmaster in 1997 and the success of question-answering system Watson on the quiz show "Jeopardy!" in 2011.

In contemporary society, AI has transcended its initial focus on industrial production and public services, permeating various sectors to streamline processes, enhance productivity, and ensure accuracy (Oxley, 2023; Akbar, Loilatu, Pribadi & Sudiar 2021; Okiyi & Nsude, 2019). Its transformative potential extends to political communication, where AI technologies like machine learning and automated decision-making play an increasingly influential role (Rabitsch,Wazir & Treml 2021). This integration of AI in political campaigns and elections reflects a broader trend of leveraging technological advancements to engage citizens and shape public discourse.

The proliferation of AI in political communication introduces both opportunities and challenges. On one hand, AI enables parties to target voters with precision, personalise messaging, and automate various aspects of campaign strategies (Polonski, 2017). On the other hand, concerns arise regarding the potential for misinformation, manipulation, and the erosion of democratic principles (Cai, 2023). The advent of generative AI and tools like ChatGPT further complicates the landscape, offering capabilities for personalised interactions and content creation based on vast datasets (Kiran, 2020).

Nigeria, recognised as a pioneer in AI adoption within the African continent, has witnessed growing interest and investment in AI-driven initiatives, including the establishment of dedicated research institutions and government initiatives (Oladeji, 2022). However, despite the prominence of AI in political communication, there remains a paucity of scrutiny regarding the content and veracity of AI-generated messages disseminated by politicians.

This study seeks to address this gap by interrogating the political communication strategies employed by key actors in the 2023 Nigerian presidential election, with a focus on identifying truths and half-truths within AI-generated messages. By subjecting political discourse to critical analysis, the study aims to underscore the importance of discerning the authenticity of political communication in an era dominated by AI technologies.

The objectives of the study is: (i) to critically examine the impact of Artificial Intelligence (AI) on political communication during the 2023 presidential election, with a focus on identifying and analysing the dissemination of truths and half-truths in AI-generated political content (ii) to explore the implications for democratic processes and voter behaviour and electoral integrity in Nigeria amine the different types of manipulated media used to spread disinformation by the political actors, (iii) to determine the platforms used to distribute manipulated media, and (iii) to provide recommendations for policy makers, regulator, and stakeholders on mitigating the risks associated with AI-generated political content.

By achieving these objectives, the study aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the complex relationships between AI, political communication and democracy in the context of the 2023 Nigerian presidential election.

Review of Literature
Political communication has historically been shaped by technological advancements, from the printing press to radio, television, and now, the internet. Each innovation has revolutionised how ideas are disseminated and how political messages are spread, ultimately influencing electoral outcomes (Nobre, 2021). In today's digital age, artificial intelligence (AI) has emerged as a pivotal tool in political communication, playing a significant role in shaping democratic processes globally.

Akbar et al. (2017) emphasise the indispensable role of AI in modern democracy, facilitating the ease of conducting elections through internet-based systems. Hafiz (2024) echoes this sentiment, highlighting how AI enhances communication and engagement in politics, enabling politicians to interact with constituents effectively through tools like chatbots and virtual assistants. Moreover, Polonski (2017) underscores the deployment of machine intelligence solutions in election campaigns to engage voters and inform them about key political issues, marking a significant shift in political communication strategies.

However, the proliferation of AI in political communication also introduces challenges and risks. The misuse of AI-powered technologies to manipulate citizens and spread misinformation is a growing concern (Polonski, 2024). Researchers have documented instances where automated bots infiltrate social media platforms to amplify one-sided political

messages, disseminate propaganda, and spread fake news, thereby distorting public discourse (Polonski, 2024). Notably, these bots have been instrumental in creating an acrimonious political climate and influencing electoral outcomes, as evidenced by their impact on elections in the United States and elsewhere (Polonski, 2024).

The emergence of deepfake technology further exacerbates the threat of AI-based disinformation campaigns. Tena (2024) describes how deepfake audio and video recordings have been used to impersonate political figures, fabricate false narratives, and manipulate public opinion, thereby challenging the integrity of democracies worldwide. This phenomenon extends beyond the realm of elections, with Effoduh (2024) noting its role in exacerbating ethnic, political, and religious divisions among Nigerians.

Moreover, the proliferation of AI-generated disinformation extends to social media platforms, where bots, trolls, and paid influencers propagate false narratives to tarnish the images of political opponents and manipulate public perception (Ajakaiye cited in Ndhlovu, 2024; Effudoh, 2024). These orchestrated campaigns aim to sway public opinion and undermine the credibility of democratic institutions, posing a significant threat to the integrity of electoral processes.

In summary, while AI holds promise for enhancing political communication and democratic engagement, its unchecked proliferation poses significant challenges to the integrity of electoral processes. Addressing these challenges requires a concerted effort to regulate AI-powered technologies, combat disinformation, and safeguard the democratic principles of transparency, accountability, and informed decision-making.

Theoretical Framework

This study utilises Information Manipulation Theory (IMT), a communication framework developed by Steven McCornack in 1992, which examines how individuals manipulate information in communication, especially in deceptive contexts. Rather than entirely fabricating information, individuals manipulate how it is presented across four dimensions:

Quantity: This dimension refers to the amount of information provided. Manipulation occurs by omitting important details or giving incomplete information, which can lead audiences to misunderstand or draw incorrect conclusions.

Quality: This pertains to the truthfulness and accuracy of information. It involves providing false information or blatant lies, presenting misleading or fabricated content as if it were true.

Relevance: This concerns the pertinence of the information to the topic. Manipulation involves presenting information that is off-topic or irrelevant, distracting or misleading the audience away from the main issue.

Manner: This relates to the clarity and ambiguity of the information. It involves presenting information in a vague, unclear, or ambiguous manner, making it difficult for the audience to grasp the true meaning or significance.

IMT is particularly useful for analysing communication in contexts such as personal relationships, organisational communication, and political discourse. In political communication, information manipulation can be used to sway public opinion or mislead voters. Politicians might emphasise certain facts (quantity), make false promises (quality), divert attention from scandals (relevance), or use complex jargon (manner) to obscure their intentions.

In today's digital era, IMT is increasingly relevant, as information manipulation can occur on a large scale through digital platforms and AI technologies. Social media, news outlets, and AI-generated content can all be used to manipulate information according to these dimensions.

Overall, Information Manipulation Theory provides a framework for understanding how and why people deceive others through subtle alterations in information presentation, highlighting the importance of critical thinking in evaluating communication.

Implications for the Study

Information Manipulation Theory (IMT) is crucial for studying "Artificial Intelligence and Political Communication: Truths and Half Truths in the 2023 Presidential Election." The theory offers a framework for understanding

how AI can be used to manipulate information in political contexts in several ways:

Understanding AI's Role in Misinformation: IMT helps identify specific ways AI contributes to spreading misinformation and half-truths during elections, offering a structured approach to analyzing these tactics.

Analysing Campaign Strategies: By applying IMT, researchers can examine how political campaigns strategically use AI to manipulate information across the four dimensions, providing insights into modern campaign tactics.

Evaluating the Impact on Voter Behaviour: Understanding how information is manipulated allows researchers to assess its impact on voter perceptions, decision-making, and ultimately, election outcomes.

Policy and Ethical Considerations: The study can highlight the need for ethical guidelines and policies to regulate AI use in political communication, ensuring transparency and accountability.

Enhancing Media Literacy: By exploring these manipulative tactics, the study can contribute to media literacy efforts, helping voters become more discerning consumers of political information.

In summary, Information Manipulation Theory offers a valuable perspective for examining the complex ways AI influences political communication, shaping public perception and discourse during elections. It underscores the importance of understanding and mitigating AI-driven information manipulation's impact on democratic processes.

Methods
To investigate the deployment of artificial intelligence (AI) in discerning truths and half-truths in the political communication of political parties, presidential candidates, and their supporters during the 2023 presidential election, a multifaceted approach combining bibliometric analysis, literature review, and exploratory case study was employed. This methodological framework aimed to develop a viable AI-based model or application for analysing political communication.

Initially, the researcher conducted an exhaustive search of academic and grey literature, accessing over 200 relevant publications retrieved from online sources. These publications formed the basis for the literature review, enabling the construction of a comprehensive body of knowledge on AI and its applications in political communication. The selection of literature was guided by specific criteria, including:

Relevance to the subject of inquiry: Publications were evaluated based on their direct relevance to the study's focus on AI in political communication, ensuring that only pertinent sources were included in the review.

Discussion of general AI applications: The literature was scrutinised for discussions on the broader applications of AI across various domains, providing insights into the capabilities and potential of AI technology.

Discussion of AI applications in political communication: Emphasis was placed on identifying literature that specifically addressed the use of AI in political communication, including its methodologies, challenges, and implications.

Perception and reception of AI-based communication by Nigerians: Publications that discussed the reception and acceptance of AI-driven political communication within the Nigerian context were prioritized, offering valuable insights into public attitudes and responses.

Following the compilation and evaluation of the literature, a bibliometric analysis was conducted to identify key trends, patterns, and gaps in the existing research landscape. This quantitative analysis provided a systematic overview of the literature, facilitating the identification of prominent themes and areas requiring further investigation.

Subsequently, an exploratory case study approach was employed to delve deeper into the practical implementation of AI in political communication during the 2023 presidential election in Nigeria. This involved the collection of empirical data from relevant sources, such as campaign materials, social media content, and public discourse, to analyse the use of AI tools and techniques by political actors.

Overall, the combination of bibliometric analysis, literature review, and exploratory case study facilitated a comprehensive examination

of AI-driven political communication, enabling the development of a robust analytical framework for discerning truths and half-truths in the Nigerian political landscape. Through this methodological approach, the study aimed to contribute valuable insights into the role of AI in shaping public discourse and democratic processes.

Data Analysis
Examination of the data from relevant sources showed that WhatsApp was the most widely used social media platform with approximately 95% of internet users in Nigeria using it regularly ([Techpoint Africa](#) 2023).The platform's broad reach, ease of use, and cost-effectiveness made it an essential tool for political communication. It allowed campaigns to share information quickly and mobilize support through direct messaging and group chats. In comparison, other platforms like Facebook and Twitter had significant but lower user engagement, with Facebook being used by 63.2% of internet users.It was also discovered that the "Obidients" effectively utilised social media to promote Peter Obi's candidacy and interact with potential voters more than the other major political actors.

The data further revealed that various social media platforms were used to disseminate different types of disinformation, propaganda, and hate speech, aiming to influence voters' opinions and undermine the electoral process. These platforms include:

WhatsApp:
   - Fake news articles and blog posts
   - Manipulated images and videos
   - Misleading voice notes and audio recordings
   - False information about candidates and their policies

An example of disinformation that circulated on WhatsApp during the election was the false claim that Peter Obi had withdrawn from the race and endorsed Atiku Abubakar. This message was entirely untrue and intended to mislead voters. Peter Obi neither withdrew from the election nor endorsed Atiku Abubakar. The purpose of this false information was to create confusion and sway voters' decisions.

How It Was Spread: The false claim was disseminated through various WhatsApp groups, both private and public, and was forwarded to many contacts. Additionally, it was shared on other social media platforms, which further amplified its reach.

Impact: This disinformation confused voters. It possibly could have undermined Peter Obi's support base and affected the election's outcome.

Twitter (now X):
   - Fake news tweets and threads
   - Manipulated hashtags and trends
   - Bots and troll accounts spreading disinformation
   - Deepfakes and AI-generated content
An example of disinformation spread on Twitter during the 2023 Nigerian presidential election is as follows:
Tweet:
"BREAKING: INEC Chairman confirms Peter Obi's withdrawal from the presidential race! #AtikuIsTheAnswer #ObiStepsDown"
 A doctored screenshot of a news article with a false headline was attached image:
Debunking:
The tweet was false and intended to mislead voters. The INEC Chairman did not confirm Peter Obi's withdrawal from the race, and the attached image was a manipulated screenshot.
How It Was Spread:
Retweets: Over 2,000 times
Replies and Quote Tweets
Hashtag Campaigns: #AtikuIsTheAnswer, #ObiStepsDown
Bots and Troll Accounts: Amplified the tweet
Impact:
This disinformation confused voters, and undermined Peter Obi's support and, could be debated if ti did not influence the election's outcome.
Although Twitter responded by labelling the tweet as "misleading" and limiting its visibility, however, the misinformation had already spread widely, leading many users to see and believe the false claims.
Facebook:
   - Fake news articles and posts
   - Manipulated images and videos
   - False information about candidates and their policies
   - Targeted ads spreading disinformation
An example of disinformation spread on Facebook regarding the candidacy of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu during the 2023 presidential election is as follows:

"BREAKING: Tinubu's Health Scare!
Leaked documents reveal Tinubu's secret medical condition!
He's unfit to lead Nigeria!
Share this post to expose the truth!"
Attached Image: A doctored image of Bola Tinubu with a Photoshopped hospital bed and medical equipment.
Debunking:
The post was false and intended to mislead voters. There was no credible evidence to support claims of Tinubu having a secret medical condition or being unfit to lead.
How It Was Spread:
Facebook Groups: Both private and public
Share Buttons
Comments and Reactions
Facebook Ads: Targeted at specific demographics
Impact:
This disinformation potentially led to:
Reduced support for Tinubu's candidacy
Increased doubts about his leadership abilities
Manipulated voters' opinions
Note: Facebook responded by removing the post for violating community standards. However, the post had already been widely shared, potentially influencing voters' perceptions.
This disinformation was designed to undermine Tinubu's candidacy by spreading false information about his health, exploiting voter concerns, and potentially impacting the election outcome.

TikTok:
   - Manipulated videos and images
   - False information about candidates and their policies
   - Hashtag challenges spreading disinformation
   - Influencers promoting false narratives

Instagram:
   - Fake news posts and stories
   - Manipulated images and videos
   - False information about candidates and their policies
   - Influencers promoting false narratives
Examples of disinformation about the three major presidential aspirants, Obi, Tinubu and Atiku spread on Instagram during the 2023 presidential election:
Peter Obi:

Post: "Peter Obi's hidden agenda: to impose Igbo domination on Nigeria!"
Image: A manipulated image of Peter Obi with a Photoshopped Igbo cultural attire and a fake quote.
Debunking: This post was false and aimed to exploit ethnic tensions.
Bola Tinubu:
Post: "Tinubu's secret deal with the cabal: selling Nigeria's assets to foreign interests!"
Image: A manipulated image of Tinubu with a Photoshopped handshake and a fake document.
Debunking: This post was false and aimed to undermine Tinubu's credibility.
Atiku Abubakar:
Post: "Atiku's plan to Islamize Nigeria: making Sharia law compulsory for all!"
Image: A manipulated image of Atiku with a Photoshopped Islamic attire and a fake quote.
Debunking: This post was false and aimed to exploit religious tensions.
These posts were spread through Instagram stories, reels, and feed posts, using hashtags and taglines to increase visibility. They aimed to manipulate voters' opinions, exploit ethnic and religious tensions, and undermine the credibility of the presidential aspirants. These platforms were used to spread various types of disinformation, including:
- False information about candidates and their policies
- Manipulated media (images, videos, audio)
- Fake news articles and posts
- Misleading hashtags and trends
- Deepfakes and AI-generated content
- Targeted ads spreading disinformation

Findings
From the findings, it would be deduced that key actors in the 2023 Nigerian presidential election, employed various political communication strategies to engage voters, shape public opinion, and influence electoral outcomes. These strategies encompassed traditional methods as well as innovative approaches facilitated by advancements in technology and media platforms. The political communication strategies employed by the key actors are:

Social Media Mobilisation:
Social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram were extensively utilised by political parties, candidates, and their supporters to mobilise voters, disseminate

campaign messages, and rally support. These platforms provided a direct and interactive channel for engaging with the electorate, facilitating real-time communication, and fostering online communities around political ideologies.

Traditional Media Engagement:
Political parties and candidates engaged with traditional media outlets such as television, radio, and newspapers to reach a broader audience and convey their campaign messages. Press conferences, interviews, and paid advertisements were commonly used strategies to gain media coverage and visibility.

Community Engagement and Grassroots Campaigns:
Political actors organised rallies, town hall meetings, and door-to-door campaigns to directly engage with communities, address local concerns, and mobilise grassroots support. This personalised approach aimed to establish a direct connection with voters and build trust through face-to-face interactions.

Youth and Celebrity Endorsements:
Political parties sought endorsements from popular celebrities, influencers, and youth icons to appeal to younger demographics and enhance their visibility on social media platforms. Endorsements were leveraged to lend credibility, attract attention, and generate buzz around specific candidates or parties.

Data Analytics and Targeted Messaging:
Political campaigns employed data analytics and targeted messaging techniques to tailor their communications to specific demographic groups, regions, or voter segments. By analysing voter data and preferences, campaigns could customize messages to resonate with targeted audiences and maximise engagement.

In summary, the political communication strategies employed by key actors in the 2023 Nigerian presidential election encompassed a mix of traditional and digital approaches, leveraging media platforms, community engagement, endorsements, and data-driven techniques to engage voters, shape perceptions, and influence electoral outcomes.

Discussions of Findings
The Use of Artificial Intelligence for Political Communication to Disseminate Truths and Half Truths in the 2023 Presidential Election
Assessing the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) for political communication to disseminate truths and half-truths in the 2023 Presidential Election involves a nuanced examination of how AI technologies were employed by various actors to shape public discourse. This includes:

AI-Driven Social Media Influence
Political actors extensively employed AI algorithms to magnify their messages on social media platforms, disseminating both truths and half-truths to their target audiences. Platforms such as Facebook and Twitter utilised automated content recommendation systems powered by AI to identify user preferences and deliver politically charged content, irrespective of its accuracy (Howard & Kollanyi, 2016).

Chatbots and Automated Messaging:
Political campaigns deployed AI-powered chatbots and automated messaging systems to disseminate information to voters, often blurring the line between truths and half-truths. Chatbots programmed with scripted responses engaged with users on messaging apps, presenting selective facts or misleading narratives to influence their opinions (Iginla & Agyemang, 2021).
Deepfake Technology:

The proliferation of deepfake technology posed significant challenges in discerning truths from half-truths, as fabricated videos circulated online, featuring political figures making false statements or engaging in deceptive actions. Deepfake videos portraying political candidates engaging in unethical behaviour surfaced on social media platforms, contributing to the dissemination of misinformation and the erosion of trust in political institutions (Seetharaman, 2020).

Algorithmic Bias and Disinformation:

AI algorithms embedded in online platforms exhibited biases that perpetuated the spread of disinformation, amplifying both truths and half-truths based on users' pre-existing beliefs and engagement patterns. Algorithmic recommendation systems favoured

sensationalised or polarising content, regardless of its accuracy, to maximise user engagement and ad revenue, exacerbating echo chambers and filter bubbles (Pariser, 2011).

Indeed, the use of AI for political communication in the 2023 Presidential Election facilitated the dissemination of both truths and half-truths, leveraging automated systems, deepfake technology, and algorithmic biases to influence public opinion. Addressing the ethical and regulatory challenges posed by AI-driven communication strategies is essential to safeguarding the integrity of democratic processes and fostering informed civic discourse.

Truths and Half-Truths in the Presidential Election

Leading up to the presidential election, a surge in misinformation inundated both online and offline political discourse, severely hampering voters' ability to make informed decisions (Africa Check, 2023). Among the candidates, Peter Obi of the Labour Party emerged as a primary target for false claims aimed at tarnishing his reputation.

One notable instance involved a viral video circulated on messaging platforms like WhatsApp and Facebook, purportedly showing US billionaire Elon Musk endorsing Peter Obi's presidential bid. However, investigations by Africa Check revealed the video to be a fabrication, generated using artificial intelligence technology. Closer scrutiny of the video uncovered its origin from a website called 'Elon Talks,' specializing in AI-generated videos featuring Elon Musk (Africa Check, 2023).

Similarly, just before the election, social media platforms were flooded with a video alleging Peter Obi's manipulation of poverty statistics during his tenure as governor of Anambra State. Subsequent analysis debunked the video as doctored and misleading (de Abren, 2023). Another manipulated video depicted Peter Obi falsely claiming to have lifted 439 million Nigerians out of poverty. Africa Check refuted this claim, clarifying that Obi had attributed such achievements to China during a speech, and the video was taken out of context (Africa Check, 2023).

In a parallel incident, an advanced AI application was utilised to fabricate a voice note implicating the People's Democratic Party presidential candidate, Atiku Abubakar, and his running mate, Ifeanyi Okowa, in an election rigging conspiracy. This digitally altered recording, mimicking the voices of the candidates, was disseminated to sow distrust and confusion among voters (Africa Check, 2023).

Beyond fabricated content, the manipulation of crowd sizes emerged as another prevalent tactic employed by political actors. Many candidates resorted to renting crowds and falsely presenting them as authentic supporters to project influence and authority (Ajakaiye, cited in Ndhlovu, 2023).

Moreover, the candidates themselves were implicated in disseminating half-truths. An analysis conducted by Akewushola et al. (2023) using FactCheckHub revealed discrepancies in the claims made by Peter Obi, Atiku Abubakar, Bola Tinubu and Rabiu Musa Kwakwanso during their respective speeches. While some claims were verified as true, others were found to be misleading or outright false, underscoring the prevalence of misinformation across political campaigns.

In sum, the presidential election witnessed a deluge of truths and half-truths disseminated through various channels, highlighting the urgent need for vigilant fact-checking and media literacy initiatives to safeguard the integrity of democratic processes.

In addition to the instances mentioned previously, several other half-truths and misleading narratives permeated the political landscape during the Nigerian 2023 presidential election.

Economic Achievements: Various candidates and their supporters touted exaggerated or misleading claims regarding their economic achievements or promises. These assertions often included inflated figures or misrepresented statistics to bolster their campaign platforms.

Security Record: Candidates frequently manipulated their security records or policies to present a favourable image to voters. This involved cherry-picking data or omitting relevant information to paint a rosier picture of their performance in tackling security challenges.

Corruption Allegations: Accusations of corruption were often weaponised by political opponents to undermine each other's credibility. While some allegations may have had merit, others were exaggerated or based on flimsy evidence, contributing to a climate of distrust and mudslinging.

Infrastructure Projects: Candidates frequently exaggerated their involvement or contributions to infrastructure projects, often taking credit for initiatives they had little to no involvement in. This tactic aimed to bolster their image as effective leaders capable of driving development.

Ethnic and Religious Manipulation: Political actors exploited ethnic and religious sentiments to sway voter opinions, often through divisive rhetoric or false promises tailored to specific demographic groups. This strategy aimed to mobilise support along ethnic or religious lines, sometimes at the expense of national unity.

Foreign Endorsements: Fake endorsements from foreign leaders or influential figures were circulated to lend credibility to certain candidates or parties. These endorsements, often fabricated or taken out of context, aimed to sway public opinion by leveraging perceived international support.

Policy Promises: Candidates frequently made lofty promises or commitments without a clear plan for implementation or feasibility assessment. While these promises may have resonated with voters, their actual likelihood of fulfilment remained questionable, leading to disillusionment post-election.

Educational Achievements: Candidates often embellished their educational credentials or academic achievements to bolster their credibility and appeal to voters. However, these claims were sometimes exaggerated or misleading. For example, there were instances where candidates falsely claimed to have obtained degrees from prestigious institutions or exaggerated their academic performance. This was case with President Bola Ahmed Tinubu who was accused of forging his academic certificates, including his degree from Chicago State University (CSU). Documents released by CSU showed discrepancies in his academic records, including a forged certificate, a female name on his his qualifying certificate, incorrect high school graduation date, and potential identity theft. Though a federal high court in Abuja dismissed a suit filed against him, and the Supreme Court ruled in his favour while dismissing the opposition's appeal, the certificate scam has remained a contentious issue as well as cast doubt Tinubu's credibility and legitimacy as president.

Healthcare Promises: Candidates frequently made promises regarding improvements to the healthcare system, including the construction of new hospitals, the recruitment of additional medical personnel, and the provision of free or subsidised healthcare services. However, the feasibility and timeline for implementing these initiatives were often unclear or misrepresented to voters.

Youth Empowerment Programmes: Political parties and candidates often pledged to implement youth empowerment programmes aimed at addressing unemployment, providing skills training, and fostering entrepreneurship among young people. While these promises resonated with voters, the actual impact and sustainability of such programmes were subject to debate and scrutiny.

Infrastructure Development: Candidates frequently touted their plans for infrastructure development, including road construction, electricity provision, and water supply projects. However, the feasibility of these projects and their potential to address existing infrastructure deficits were often exaggerated or misrepresented for political gain.

Poverty Alleviation Programmes: Candidates often promised to implement poverty alleviation programs aimed at reducing inequality, providing social welfare benefits, and lifting people out of poverty. However, the effectiveness and sustainability of these programmes were often called into question, with critics highlighting the lack of concrete plans or funding mechanisms.

Overall, the Nigerian 2023 presidential election was marked by a proliferation of half-truths and misleading narratives, reflecting the broader trend of misinformation and manipulation prevalent in contemporary political campaigns. Addressing these challenges requires a concerted effort to promote transparency, accountability, and fact-based discourse in electoral processes.

These examples demonstrate the prevalence of half-truths and misleading narratives in the Nigerian 2023 presidential election, underscoring the importance of fact-checking and accountability in the electoral process.

To combat the challenges posed by the use of AI in political communication in Nigeria, a multifaceted approach is required, encompassing regulatory measures, technological solutions, and public awareness campaigns. The paper hereby makes some recommendations:

Establish Clear Regulations and Guidelines

Develop and enforce clear regulations and ethical guidelines specifically targeting the use of AI in political communication. These regulations should address issues such as transparency, accountability, and data protection to ensure the responsible use of AI technologies.

Clear regulations are essential to provide legal frameworks for governing the use of AI in political communication, safeguarding democratic processes and citizen rights (Braendle & Goggins, 2020).

Enhance Public Awareness and Digital Literacy

Implement public awareness campaigns and educational programs to enhance citizens' understanding of AI-driven misinformation and manipulation in political communication. Promote digital literacy skills to empower citizens to critically evaluate information online.

Educating the public about the risks associated with AI in political communication is crucial for fostering informed decision-making and reducing susceptibility to manipulation (Wardle & Derakhshan, 2017).

Foster Collaboration between Stakeholders

Facilitate collaboration between government agencies, civil society organisations, tech companies, and academic institutions to develop strategies and tools for detecting and mitigating the spread of AI-driven misinformation. Collaborative efforts leverage diverse expertise and resources to effectively address the complex challenges posed by AI in political communication (Marwick & Lewis, 2017).

Ethics Committees and Guidelines

Establish ethics committees comprised of interdisciplinary experts to develop and disseminate guidelines for the ethical use of AI in political communication, promoting responsible practices among stakeholders.

Promote Algorithmic Transparency and Accountability

Mandate transparency requirements for AI algorithms used in political communication, enabling independent auditing and scrutiny. Hold political actors and tech companies accountable for the ethical use of AI technologies. Algorithmic transparency is essential for fostering trust and accountability in AI-driven political communication, enabling scrutiny of decision-making processes (Sandvig et al., 2014).

Invest in Research and Development

Allocate resources for research and development to advance AI technologies that can detect and counteract misinformation in political communication. Support interdisciplinary research initiatives to explore the societal impacts of AI. Investing in research and development is essential for developing innovative solutions to combat the misuse of AI in political communication and mitigate its adverse effects (Floridi & Cowls, 2019).

Implementing these recommendations can help mitigate the negative impacts of AI in political communication in Nigeria, safeguarding democratic processes and promoting informed civic engagement.

Conclusion

The study was able to show that Artificial Intelligence tools were massively applied by political actors during the 2023 presidential election. It also drove home the point that with the increasing complexity of socio-political communication, AI tools can provide valuable support to politicians. In addition to to a variety of ways to analyse data, they can improve decision-making and policy formulation to enhance communication with constituents (Hafiz, 2024). There fore, as Nigeria's electoral system and politicians embrace the

opportunities presented by AI, the landscape of politics is poised for irreversible transformative paradigm shift.

References

Abimbola, K. A. (2019) Political communication in Nigeria: A case study of 2015 general elections. International Journal of Communication and Media Studies, 6(1), 1-12.

Akbar, P., Loilatu, M. J., Pribadi, U., & Sudiar, S. (2021). IOP Conf. Ser.: Earth Environ. Sci. 717 012017

Alabi, O., & Ogunrinde, R. B. (2018) Regulatory and Policy Issues in the Adoption and Use of Artificial Intelligence in Nigeria. In Proceedings of the International Conference on Big Data and Cyber-Physical Systems (pp. 108-116). Springer.

Alechenu, J. (2023). Polls: AI technology used to clone Atiku, Okowa's voices – Expert. https://www.vanguardngr.com. Retrieved 11/3/24

Anifowose, R., & Babawale, T. (2016). Political communication in Nigeria: The challenge of information dissemination. African Journal of Political Science and International Relations, 10(5), 68-78.

Balogun, I. A. (2018). Grassroots political mobilization in Nigeria: A study of the 2015 general elections. African Journal of Political Science and International Relations, 12(8), 135-144.

Braendle, U. C., & Goggins, G. E. (2020). Braendle, U. C., & Goggins, G. E. (2020). Artificial Intelligence and Political Processes: A Call for Guidelines and Regulatory Oversight. Policy & Internet, 12(4), 542-566.

Cai, S. (2023). Cai, S. (2023). How AI is already changing the 2024 election https://www.axios.com/2023/04/29/how-ai-already-changing-2024-election. Retrieved 5/3/24

Calo, R. (2017) Artificial Intelligence Policy: A Primer and Roadmap. SSRN Electronic Journal.

Diakopoulos, N. (2016). Accountability in Algorithmic Decision Making. Communications of the ACM, 59(2), 56-62.

de Abren, C. M. (2023) Nigeria elections: Edited video of presidential hopeful Peter Obi goes viral. https://www.france24.com/en/tv-shows/truth-or-fake/20230116-nigeria-elections-2023-edited-video-of-peter-obi-goes-viral. Retrieved 15/3/24

Diakopoulos, N. (2016, 2019). Automated Journalism and Bots. In R. E. Kluver, K. H. Weaver, & M. S. Shah (Eds.), Routledge Handbook of Media Law (pp. 244-255). Routledge.

Floridi, L., & Cowls, J. (2019) A Unified Framework of Five Principles for AI in Society. Harvard Data Science Review, 1(1).

Gehl, R. W. (2019). Power/freedom on the dark web: A digital ethnography of the Dark Web Social Network. Social Media + Society, 5(1), 2056305119835111.

Hafiz, A. (2024). The Positive Impacts of Artificial Intelligence on Politics: A Paradigm Shift in Governance. https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/positive-impacts-artificial-intelligence-politics-paradigm-hafiz-6pz0c?trk=article-ssr-frontend-pulse_more-articles_related-content-card. Retrieved 13/3/24

Howard, P. N., & Kollanyi, B. (2016). Bots, #StrongerIn, and #Brexit: Computational propaganda during the UK-EU referendum. Available at SSRN 2798311.

Ibrahim, A. A. (2020). Regulatory Challenges and Legal Framework of Artificial Intelligence in Nigeria. In International Conference on Advanced Intelligent Systems for Sustainable Development (pp. 213-223). Springer.

Iginla, S., & Agyemang, E. N. (2021). Elections, social media and political communication in Africa: Issues, challenges and prospects. Palgrave Macmillan.

Iyengar, S., & McGrady, J. (2007). Iyengar, S., & McGrady, J. (2007). Media politics: A citizen's guide. W. W. Norton & Company.

Marwick, A., & Lewis, R. (2017). Media Manipulation and Disinformation Online. Data & Society.

Nobre, G. (2021). Artificial Intelligence and Political Communication: machines that go for (political, economic, and social) power. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/356355285. Retrieved 23/3/24

Ogbeide, F. O., & Odigie, B. E. (2021). Social media and the 2019 Nigerian general elections: A study of campaign strategies and voter engagement. Journal of African Elections, 20(2), 173-192.

Okoli, M. O., & Anyanwu, C. O. (2020). Celebrity politics and the 2019 Nigerian general elections: The case of Davido's endorsement of the People's Democratic Party. Journal of Public Affairs, 20(3), e2060.

Oladeji, F. (2022) Developing An AI Policy For Nigeria. https://www.dailytrust.com. Retrieved 11/3/24

Olagunju, L. (2023). FACT CHECK: Verifying Atiku's claims at NESG presidential dialogue. https://www.thecable.ng/fact-check-verifying-atikus-claims-at-nesg-presidential-dialogue. Retrieved 15/3/24

Onyima, I. A., & Ugwu, I. (2019). Political communication and celebrity endorsement in Nigerian politics: Lessons from the 2019 general elections. Journal of Communication and Media Research, 11(1), 9-26.

Pariser, E. (2011). The filter bubble: How the new personalized web is changing what we read and how we think. Penguin.

Polonski, V. (2017). The good, the bad and the ugly uses of machine learning in election campaigns. Centre For Public Impact (CPI). Retrieved 15/3/24

Rabitsch, A., Wazir, R. & Treml, T. (2021). POLICY PAPER on Artificial Intelligence's (AI) Impact on Freedom of Expression in Political Campaign and Elections. https://www.osce.org. Retrieved 11/3/24

Techpoint Africa (2023). How social media influenced Nigeria's 2023 elections. https://techpoint.africa/2023/03/22/how-social-media-influenced-nigerias-2023-elections/. Retrieved 15/3/24.