

ASSESSMENT OF RHETORICAL USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA FOR THE 2019 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The evolution of social media sites such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, Instagram, Telegram, and YouTube, among others, has revolutionized the pattern of political mobilization and participation globally. Hence, political actors and followers are using these platforms more often to mobilize and engage voters persuasively. This explains why researches by different scholars have been carried out on the rhetorical devices politicians employed while communicating on social media. However, within the limit of the available literature none of the reviewed studies were conducted in Nigeria or about the 2019 Nigerian Presidential Election. Hence, this study assessed rhetorical use of social media for the 2019 presidential election in Nigeria. The study was anchored on the Aristotle's Rhetorical Theory. The study used qualitative content analysis research design by using screenshots of social media campaigns posts of Atiku and Buhari for data collection. A textual analysis of social media posts was done using Aristotle's rhetorical strategies of persuasion-ethos, logos, pathos, and kairos. To achieve this, this study analyzed only the "Likes" and "Shares" of social media posts Atiku and Buhari with regards to 2019 Presidential Election in Nigeria. The study found that pathos was the prominent rhetoric appeal used by candidates during the 2019 elections in Nigeria. Pathos is a rhetorical device that both Buhari and Atiku used to appeal to the emotions of the electorates in order to support their positions. The study concludes that political candidates

during the 2019 presidential election employed more pathos as a persuasive strategy to appeal to the electorate's emotions and evoke feelings in ways social media was used in political mobilization. The study recommends, among others, that since logos was the least used persuasive appeal during the 2019 Presidential Election, politicians should use social media to engage and mobilize voters for policy development using proof, statistics and data rather than projecting their credibility and appealing to voters emotions as a way of increasing online engagement and political participation.

Keywords: Rhetorical Analysis, Social Media, Mobilization, Participation and Elections.

Introduction

In recent decades, there has been a change in the pattern of political mobilization and participation largely because of the introduction of numerous social networking sites like Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, Instagram, Telegram, and YouTube, among others. As Meti, Khandoba and Guru (2015) note, social media users are now encouraged to participate in political activities, such as joining political groups by tweeting, updating their status, and expressing support through blogs and YouTube videos. Social media has become an indispensable tool for communication. Social media has caused a shift in the patterns of political engagement and mobilization, and as a result, both people and political institutions, such as politicians, political parties, journalists, civil society organizations, and observers, are using these platforms more often. Social media gives users the chance to interact with like-minded people or those who share their political opinions and inclinations, such as partisan institutions and political players (Dimitrova, Shehata, Stromback, & Nord, 2014). This increases the likelihood that social media users will actively participate in collective action by drawing their attention to and directing them toward particular calls for mobilization and involvement in social problems (de Zuniga, Molyneux, & Zheng, 2014; Dimitrova, Shehata, Stromback, & Nord, 2014). As a result, Filer & Fredheim 2018 and Singer & Emerson 2018 suggest that social media is the best tool and information source for determining public opinion on issues and political stances and for fostering support for public office candidates among the general public.

However, whether the use of social media for politics influences citizens' participation is still subject to debate. Boulianne (2015) points out that there are four main theories put out by literature to explain how social media use could impact political involvement. These are the Uses and Gratifications Theory (Katz et al., 1974), Social Network Theory (Freeman, 1979), Appraisal Theory (Lazarus, 1991) and the Priming Paradigm (Higgins, 1996). According to one theory, users of digital networks are more exposed to weak relationships and are thus more likely to hear about chances for participation and to be requested to join in civic life (Gil de Zúñiga, Jung, & Valenzuela, 2012). Second, users discover news through posts made by other users, and since contacts introduce them to the

news, this kind of information might have an impact (Bode, [2012](#)). Social media may help people become more informed about political problems, encouraging public involvement (Loader, Vromen & Xenos, [2014](#)). Third, social media users are more likely to get in touch with political groups and be requested to take part on their behalf. Fourth, social media users' engagement is contagious as their connections' political posts influence them (Bond, Fariss, Jones, Kramer, Marlow, Settle, & Fowler, [2012](#)).

Researchers such as Abubakar 2012; Meti, Khandoba & Guru 2015 and Ekwueme & Folarin 2017 have studied the use of social media for political mobilization and participation across the globe. During elections, political parties and politicians utilize a variety of websites to spread their message, gather support, stay in constant communication with the public, and encourage voters and candidates to get involved in politics. *More, researchers are becoming more interested in studying the method used by politicians in persuading the electorate during electioneering. According to La Torre et al. (2020), persuading an audience using language, discourse, and stylistic elements is known as rhetoric.* According to Rapp (2023), persuasion is based on a rhetorical technique that combines pathos, logos, and ethos to influence listeners' opinions and convince them in various ways for various goals (La Torre et al., 2020).

Numerous research works have been carried out on politicians' rhetorical devices while communicating on social media. For instance, Rossini et al. (2018) analyzed social media, opinion polls, and the use of persuasive messages during the 2016 US election primaries; Samuel-Azran, Yarchi and Wolfsfeld (2015) investigated Aristotelian rhetoric and Facebook success in Israel's 2013 election campaign; Bronstein, Aharony and Bar-Ilan (2018) assessed politicians' use of Facebook during elections; Mshvenieradze (2013) ascertained logos ethos and pathos in political discourse; and English, Sweetser and Ancu (2011) investigated the Youtube-ification of political talk with a focus on examination of persuasion appeals in viral video. However, much of the scholarly discussion has focused on countries like Israel, Malaysia and the USA. On the other hand, less is known empirically about the rhetorical analysis of the use of social media during electioneering in

Nigeria. Consequently, this study sought to fill the knowledge gap by investigating the rhetorical use of social media for the 2019 Presidential Election in Nigeria.

a) Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to assess **social media use for political mobilization and participation in the 2019 Elections in Nigeria**. Specifically, the study seeks to:

1. Establish the most preferred rhetoric strategies of Aristotelians used by candidates and their parties during the 2019 presidential election in Nigeria.
2. Ascertain the popularity of candidates' Aristotelian rhetoric strategies and their ability to engage social media users during the 2019 presidential election in Nigeria.

Literature Review

Use of Rhetoric by Political Parties in Social Media

Political parties face difficulties in maintaining an official social media presence in this day and age. Political parties at the national and local levels will be able to disseminate information about their party via the official party account. Thus, social media will be overflowing with party information. According to Cab (2017), there is now a new space for engagement and communication due to the growing social media usage by political parties, advocacy organizations, and regular people. According to academics like Zappavigna (2013) and Opeibi (2015), these new media platforms have increased people's interconnectedness beyond temporal, physical, cultural, and political borders. The rhetoric that permeates politicians' online communications and how the public interprets it has since been the subject of several studies (Robertson, Vatrappu, & Medina, 2010; Strandberg, 2013). Thus far, the findings have been conflicting. While some have pointed to a profound, issue-based conversation about political events, especially among politically inclined groups like students (Fernandes, Giurcanu, Bowers & Neely, 2010), others have exposed surface-level, entertainment-focused interactions between politicians and their supporters (English, Sweetser, & Ancu, 2011; Erikson, 2008).

Bronstein (2013) identified that the online Aristotelian language employed by Obama and Romney during the 2012 election campaign was centred on emotional messaging or pathos. The author also argues that US politicians utilize Facebook to foster fans rather than serious discourse. Similar to this, Samuel-Azran, Yarchi, and Wolfsfeld (2015) investigated the reception of Aristotelian rhetoric used by Israeli politicians on Facebook during the 2013 election campaign, concluding that pathos-based appeals garnered the most "likes," while ethos was the most commonly employed rhetorical strategy. The findings indicate a disparity between the vocabulary that captures social media users' attention and the words politicians use throughout their campaigns. Like Samuel-Azran, Yarchi and Wolfsfeld's study, previous studies such as Alexa (2014) ; Kabir and Urbach (2013); and Bronstein (2013), explained that candidates' ethos (credibility) compared to the pathos (predominance of emotion) in regular election campaigns. Although previous studies such as Samuel-Azran, Yarchi, and Wolfsfeld (2015) ; Alexa (2014) ; Kabir and Urbach (2013) and Brontein 2013 examined "likes" and "shares" as opposed to political comments and "likes" using Aristotelian rhetorical strategies of ethos, pathos and logos appeals, this present study includes Kairos as the fourth rhetorical strategy or persuasive appeal of Facebook, Twitter and Instagram posts of the candidates their parties and affiliates during 2019 Presidential Election in Nigeria. According to Lunsford, Ruskiewicz and Walters (2016), kairos is a rhetorical device that considers the pertinence of a message or argument in a persuasive appeal. It also entails considering the time, location, and context, as well as the proper appeal's tone, structure, and timing.

Samuel-Azran, Yarchi, and Wolfsfeld (2015) argue that liking is an action that always expresses support, and sharing often expresses support since sharing allows users to place the post on their own Facebook wall. This justifies the analysis of likes and shares rather than likes and comments of politicians post on social media. Furthermore, they contend that although like and sharing are both ways to show support, sharing is seen to include a deeper level of involvement with the topic than liking (Malhotra, Kubowicz-Malhotra, & See, 2013; Nicholas, 2013; Katz, 2014). As a result, it is thought that sharing rather than

commenting is a more accurate indicator of how popular politicians' speech is. The examination of likes and shares demonstrates the appeal of politicians' Aristotelian rhetorical techniques and their capacity to captivate social media users. In the era of social media, messages that receive a large number of likes and shares indicate a candidate's capacity to mobilize the support of online network members, whereas postings with few likes and/or shares may testify to a candidate's lack of online support. Election campaigns now compete on the basis of likes and shares, with candidates frequently disclosing to the public the amount of likes and shares their messages receive on social media as a gauge of their popularity and frequently pleading with their followers to increase these numbers (Samuel-Azran, Yarchi, & Wolfsfeld, 2015).

Review of Empirical Studies

Samuel-Azran, Yarchi, and Wolfsfeld (2015) investigated Aristotelian rhetoric and Facebook success in Israel's 2013 election campaign, emphasising the 2013 election campaign's reception of Israeli candidates' Aristotelian rhetoric on Facebook. According to Samuel-Azran, Yarchi, and Wolfsfeld's research, pathos-based appeals garnered the most "likes," although ethos was the most often employed rhetorical device. The findings indicate a disparity between the vocabulary that captures social media users' attention and the words politicians use throughout their campaigns. The study conducted by Samuel-Azran, Yarchi, and Wolfsfeld came to the conclusion that, unlike conventional election campaigns in two-party systems like the US, Israel's multi-party political system promotes focus on candidates' trustworthiness (ethos) as opposed to the predominance of emotion (pathos). One theory that might apply is the competitive nature of elections in a multi-party system, where candidates must highlight their unique leadership qualities and character. In order to assess how much our findings can be applied to other nations, Samuel-Azran, Yarchi, and Wolfsfeld's study suggested that future research look at the application and interpretation of rhetorical techniques in social media campaigns of other nations with multi-party systems.

In a study titled “Like me! Analyzing the 2012 presidential candidates' Facebook pages,” The Aristotelian language of persuasion, which consists of three elements: ethos, an ethical appeal meant to persuade an audience of the author's credibility; pathos, an emotional appeal meant to arouse fear or sympathy; and logos, an appeal to reason or logic was used by Bronstein (2013) to analyze the Facebook pages of Barack Obama and Mitt Romney. Five hundred thirteen postings gathered throughout the final three months of the 2012 US presidential election made up the sample. Three stages were made up of examining the candidates' Facebook pages: recognizing the various components of the Aristotelian language of persuasion, identifying the topics covered in the posts, and identifying any further functions that the pages serve in the campaigns. According to Bronstein's research, both candidates presented a personal picture that included relatively little information about their personal lives while building social capital via the use of emotional and motivational appeals. A statistical study reveals that the postings' use of persuasion impacted the quantity of comments and likes received. The findings indicate that campaigns posted material on a limited selection of uncontroversial topics to maintain control over the message shown on the pages. Lastly, the content analysis showed that the Facebook sites served as platforms for supporter mobilization and fundraising. Both candidates' Facebook accounts promote a different approach to politics known as “fandom politics,” which is predicated on the emotive sensibilities of the public rather than logic or reason. This approach discourages criticism and fosters affective allegiances between the candidate and his followers. The survey also discovered that by employing the pathos factor in a significant portion of their postings, Obama and Romney both used emotive and motivating tactics to win over fans to their Facebook accounts.

According to Bronstein's analysis, the information on the website had to be restricted to popular themes and stay away from potentially contentious ones in order to maintain control. Therefore, analyzing the shifts in the political landscape may be facilitated by examining how social networks are used to disseminate political information. In order to determine whether there were any changes in the usage of the various platforms,

Bronstein's study suggested that future research concentrate on the use of other social media during the 2012 US elections. Research on elections in other countries should also be expanded. In a study titled "Youtube-ification of political talk: an examination of persuasion appeals in viral video" English, Sweetser and Ancu (2011) investigated perceptions and reactions to political video messages available on YouTube. Three participant groups were exposed to three distinct kinds of communications regarding the topic of health care reform through the use of an experimental design. Three separate persuasive appeals were used in each message: comedy, emotion, and an authoritative source. English, Sweetser, and Ancu's study aimed to learn more about how the public uses political information and what kinds of citizen-produced political messaging they find trustworthy and enticing. A second line of inquiry examines the relationship between the culmination and outcomes of citizen-produced online political messaging and underlying political attitudes and behaviours, such as political efficacy, political cynicism, and political participation. The study aimed to determine the validity of political messages disseminated via viral video social media sites like YouTube using a three-cell posttest-only experimental design.

According to English, Sweetser, and Ancu's study, the ethos appeal was found to be the most trustworthy, followed by logos and pathos. This conclusion suggests that consumers are not easily influenced by emotion or factual data and instead focus on the source of the message. There was no correlation seen between the participants' political cynicism or political information efficacy and the appeals. The study conducted by English, Sweetser, and Ancu concluded that viral videos may serve as a valuable source of online political information created by individuals for other citizens rather than merely being a trending subject or something everyone's friends forward to each other. Additionally, it laid the groundwork for upcoming studies on assessing appeals and other matters when fresh sources of political data surface. In a study titled "Hashtag War: 2019 Presidential Election Rhetoric in Indonesia", Avin, Mardhani, Acintya, Itsna, Arlianto, Ramadhan, and Rinanda (2020) explored the hashtag distribution patterns that built political rhetoric on Twitter as the social media and find out public sentiments in Twitter contents. Avin et al's

study collected data in the form of tweets during the periods before, during, and after the four Presidential debates.

Then, the data were filtered based on the tweet contents that used #Jokowi2periode and #2019GantiPresiden hashtags and contained opinions or responses to the debate process. Avin et al.'s study found that the hashtags # 2019GantiPresiden and # Jokowi2Periode created networks representing the campaign strategies. On the other hand, #Jokowi2Periode shows spreading patterns (decentralized) to various areas, depending on the actor's presentation, which fulfils the sign-filtered and hyper-personal theories. Avin et al. concluded that Twitter was made as a media platform that builds rhetoric that can be adapted to specific preference models to attract supporters during the 2019 presidential election period in Indonesia. However, much academic discourse has centred on nations like Malaysia, Israel, and the United States. Conversely, there is a dearth of empirical research on the rhetorical analysis of social media use in Nigerian electioneering. Therefore, by examining the rhetorical usage of social media for the 2019 Nigerian Presidential Election, this study aimed to close the knowledge gap

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on Aristotle's Rhetorical Theory

Aristotle's Rhetorical Theory

Aristotle's Rhetoric, written in the fourth century BCE, is a classical Greek manual on persuasion. There are several variations in the English title: Rhetoric, the Art of Rhetoric, On Rhetoric, or a Treatise on Rhetoric is common (Garver, 1994). Rhetoric by Aristotle is generally considered a handbook on persuasion (Lee, 2005; Burke, 2008). Understanding the meaning of rhetoric starts with Aristotle's definition, which states that rhetoric is the art of identifying every possible means of persuasion. The employment of pathos, or emotional argument, ethos, or speaker credibility, and logos, or logical argument, to create a compelling argument was known as rhetoric to the ancient Greeks. Rhetoric was the art of conversation, a methodical and creative examination of the five rhetorical canons (innovation, organization, style, delivery, and memory) (Littlejohn & Foss, 2009). Neo-

rhetorical literature was concerned with people's daily lives, such as in argument, while classical rhetorical works were mostly concerned with politics and public addresses (Lee, 2018). Three methods of persuasion constitute the foundation of Aristotle's Rhetoric theory: ethos (persuasion via the speaker's character), pathos (persuasion through the hearer's emotions), and logic (persuasion through the argument itself).

This is represented in the triangle below:

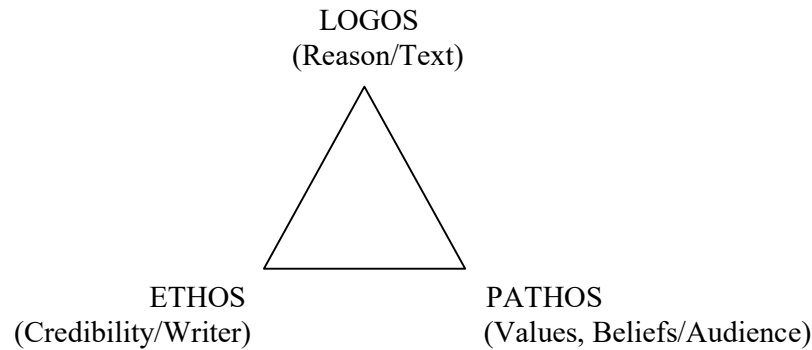


Figure 2.1: Rhetorical Triangle

Sources: Louisiana State University, 2017

Methodology

This study examined social media campaign messages from Nigeria's 2019 presidential election using qualitative and quantitative research approaches. The researching instrument used was content analysis. The researcher coded the post into the three persuasive components of the Aristotelian rhetorical elements. The population of this study centered on social media posts of the two major contenders (Buhari and Atiku) political parties (PDP and APC) and their affiliates in Nigeria's 2019 presidential election. Screenshots and downloads of political campaign posts of the two main candidates (Buhari and Atiku), their parties' pages as well as those of their affiliates were collected from Facebook, and Twitter (now X). These were harvested via manual search on the social media pages of the political candidates, parties and their affiliates by typing in key words like their names,

slogans and hashtags, presidential campaign and the date. Therefore, a total of 665 posts were extracted. The basis for this study's data analysis is the Aristotelian rhetorical strategies of pathos (i.e., emotional appeals), logos (i.e., rational/intellectual appeals), and ethos (i.e., ethical appeals). Furthermore, Kairos, or right-time appeals, were employed in the data analysis process. Additionally, in order to provide a framework for assessing this study, the methods for evaluating political speech from recent studies employing Aristotelian rhetoric by certain scholars (e.g., Samuel-Azran et al., 2015; Brostein, 2013) were utilized by this study.

Results and Discussion

A total of 665 posts sourced from the Twitter and Facebook pages of Atiku and Buhari have been used for analysis and presented in two main tables in this section. The units for the categorisation of the posts were "likes" and "shares" and further categorised into pathos, ethos, logos and kairos

Table 1: Frequency Distribution of Social Media Rhetorical Strategies

Appeals	Ethos	Logos	Pathos	Kairos	Total
Atiku	74(11.1)	25(3.7)	408(61.3)	31(4.7)	538(80.9)
Buhari	22(3.3)	11(1.7)	88(13.2)	6(0.9)	127(19.1)
Total	96(14.4)	36(5.4)	496(74.6)	37(5.6)	665(100)

Source: Author's Field Work, 2022

Table 1 shows that pathos rhetorical strategies or technique of persuasion (496) was most prevalent among the social media posts sourced from Twitter, Facebook and Instagram, followed by ethos (96), Kairos came third (37) and logos (36). From the above table, all the social media posts sourced from Atiku and Buhari had more of pathos followed by ethos then Kairos and logos came third and fourth respectively. This means that during the electioneering, messages or posts were directed at appealing to the electorates' emotion followed by projecting candidate's credibility or competence. The plan behind the employment of ethical reasoning by candidates, parties, and affiliates is that users of social media are more inclined to be persuaded by the moral character and professional

background of candidates. Politicians achieve this by giving the electorate the sense that they are capable of alleviating their suffering and experiences, making them a person worth entrusting with the affairs of governance. However, all the posts paid little attention to reason, evidence or proof. Although, timeliness of the mode of persuasion or rhetorical strategies is apt in terms of electioneering period, some posts factored in the season (Christmas) or events (wounded troops in North-East) to either appeal to the emotion of electorates or project the image of candidates. Below is how candidates used pathos, ethos, logos and karios in their messages during the 2019 presidential election in Nigeria. For instance, Atiku Abubakar from time to time invoked the feeling of Nigerians and his plan to ameliorate their pain.

“So, let me reassure you my friends: we are going to win these elections. And to our long-suffering citizens, I say do not despair, our time is now, and together we shall reshape the destiny of our beloved country” (Tweeted by **Atiku Abubakar in 19 Feb 2019**) And to the Nigerian electorate, I call on you to save your beloved country from dictatorship by voting against President Buhari’s desperate war against the judiciary. Our country is falling apart under the leadership of President Buhari and it is time to stand up for democracy” (Tweeted by **Atiku Abubakar in 25 Jan 2019**).

The choice of words in both posts can invoke a sense of motivation among the social media users to participate in the 2019 general elections. During the electioneering, electorates were placed at the centre of the messages to maximise the impact on electorate’s emotions, and thus, motivate them to participate. After the elections were postponed, Atiku managed to motivate the electorate to vote by turning up on the new date.

“Please come out to vote on Saturday, 23 February and Saturday, 9 March respectively. Frustrate those who do not want this election to hold by coming out in very large numbers. That is the best antidote to their plans” (Tweeted by **Atiku Abubakar in 16 Feb 2019**). “I find it necessary to, firstly pay tribute to every member of our great party, and our long-suffering people who directly bear the costs of the cancellation of the first phase of our

general elections that was to commence on February 16th, 2019 #PDPNEC Meeting” (Tweeted by **Atiku Abubakar in 19 Feb 2019**).

The choice of words in both posts can invoke a sense of motivation among electorates and party’s stakeholders to be committed to vote PDP and Atiku as the preferred candidate. In similar vein, Buhari also timely appealed to the emotions of Nigerians or electorates to vote.

I appeal to all Nigerians not to lose hope in our electoral system. Do not allow the unexpected postponement by INEC to prevent you from exercising your civic right. Our administration remains committed to a credible electoral process in which your votes will count” (Tweeted **Muhammadu Buhari in 19 Feb 2019**).

In the above post, the central message was meant to convince the electorates to come out amass to vote. Sometimes, the use of pathos is not just about creating emotions, it can also be about counteracting it. For instance, to dispel rumor about being cloned, President Muhammadu Buhari posted updates about the issue thus:

“One of the questions that came up today in my meeting with Nigerians in Poland was on the issue of whether I’ve been cloned or not. The ignorant rumours are not surprising-when I was away on medical vacation last year a lot of people hoped I was dead” (**Muhammadu Buhari 02 Dec 2018**).

Both candidates in the 2019 general elections in Nigeria used social media posts for political mobilization by appealing and attracting voters by projecting their credibility and reputation (ethos appeals). Since, trustworthiness is a valuable component in politics, both Buhari and Atiku made use of ethos as a strategy, and built trustworthiness with the general public. For instance, Muhammadu Buhari assured Nigerians of his determination not to use government funds for all his campaigns.

I won’t use government money for my campaign in 2019 (**Muhammadu Buhari 10 Jan 2019**). I have blocked all the leakages that is why they don’t like me. With your votes, I will take our economy back- **Muhammadu Buhari 11 Jan 2019**”.

In addition, it was also found that the use of past performance was used as one of the persuasive elements as it portrays credibility when mobilizing Nigerians during the 2019 general election.

“WE WILL CONTINUE TO WORK TO PROTECT YOUR INTEREST AND DELIVER OUR MANDATE. Fellow Compatriots, It’s been over three years since you gave me the mandate to oversee the affairs of our dear country. It’s not been an easy journey but with sincerity of purpose, perseverance, dedication and most importantly support from individuals like you, we have made great progress. Some of these achievements are visible for everyone to see, some are still in the works. I hereby humbly ask for your support again in the coming election to enable us to move to the NEXT LEVEL and consolidate on the successes recorded in making our country a better place. I don’t take your support for granted. We will continue to work to protect your interest and deliver our mandate” **(Muhammadu Buhari Feb 10, 2019).**

Buhari’s message was meant to portray his credibility as a sitting President. His detailed account of the first tenure was to prove his credibility and reputation as a candidate that can be trusted. In some instance, the credibility of Buhari was questioned by his opponent Atiku Abubakar thus;

Mr President, assurance that your administration will conduct free, fair and credible elections cannot be taken seriously. For Nigerians and especially us in the opposition, you just missed an opportunity to walk the talk” **(Atiku Abubakar 07 Dec 2018).**

In similar vein, to build trustworthiness with future plans, Atiku Abubakar attempted to link his past achievement with the demand of presiding over Nigeria as the president.

I have been operating one of the most successful and efficient Micro Finance Banks. The bank alone has lifted 45, 000 families out of poverty. And the policy I gave the bank was 80% of loans go to women. Currently, I have recovery rate of 98% **(tweeted by Atiku Abubakar in 16 January 2019)** Also, this is what I intend to bring back to our government. As you probably know, @peterobi also knows a lot about reducing debts. We have a solid team to deal with debt **(tweeted by Atiku Abubakar in 24 January 2019).**

As we begin our regional campaigns today, I want to remind all Nigerians of my commitment to you the future of our nation to create JOBS: Jobs, Opportunity, Being united and Security” (**Atiku Abubakar 16 Feb 2019**)

From the above posts, both candidates used their social media posts to build trustworthiness and credibility to attract or mobilize voters during the 2019 general election. Apart from ethos and pathos, both candidates used their social media sites to post information by using facts and evidence to persuade users to see the validity of the argument.

Today in Niger State I commissioned the Baro Inland Water Port. Our commitment to developing and upgrading the infrastructure of Nigeria is total, and we have demonstrated this beyond doubt since we came to power. I assure you that we will do even more in our second term” (**Muhammadu Buhari Feb 19, 2019**).

For Atiku, stating the fact about the debt free status of Nigeria during his time as Vice President positioned him to deal with the debt incurred under the administration of President Buhari.

As at when we left office in 2007, our debts had all been paid off. This was because there was a razor sharp focus on building a strong foundation for growth (Atiku Abubakar 24 January, 2019).

Karios is a persuasive strategy employed in political communication to make a statement that will be instantly applicable, acceptable, and interesting to a certain audience in this case, social media users in an effort to create a pivotal moment. It was found in this study that persuasion with the use of timeliness (Karios) as a strategy can also create an action when the audience is moved by the context.

“Key on our priority also, is resolution of subsisting issues of insecurity in the region including the farmer-herder conflicts. These we will deal with, using improved intelligence, diplomacy, promotion of good neighbourliness with support from the traditional institutions” (**Atiku Abubakar on 05 Dec 2018**).

Atiku tweet the above post shortly after the attack in Benue State by Herdsmen. Buhari also tweeted about action taken to resolve industrial strike embarked by ASUU.

The Executive Committee of the National Association of Nigerian Students (NANS) visited today. The ongoing strike action by ASUU was one of the issues we discussed. The Federal Government is working hard towards a resolution, and we will continue to ask for ASUU understanding” (**Muhammadu Buhari 03 Jan 2019**)

Common occurrences of Karios can also be seen through messages being posted by these candidates. It is believed politicians used this persuasive appeal in the hope of building a connection with the right public at the right time.

My condolences to the Nigerian Army over the recent attack that led to loss of lives of officers and men of the 157 Task Force Battalion in Metele, Borno State. These deaths are very painful and the loss of even one member of our armed forces pierces my heart because these heroes did not have to die. They volunteered to do a job that keeps this nation safe. The gallant men and women of our security services are our first and last line of defence against enemies of our nation and deserve the support and confidence of all Nigerians (**Atiku Abubakar 02 Dec 2018**)

“Today in Maiduguri I visited our wounded troops. Across the Northeast we have officers and men fighting bravely and tirelessly to keep our country safe from terrorism and violence. I salute their sacrifice on our behalf. And may the souls of the fallen rest in peace (**Muhammadu Buhari 03 Dec 2018**)

In summary, the study found that pathos was the prominent rhetoric appeal used by candidates during the 2019 elections in Nigeria. Pathos is a rhetorical device that both Buhari and Atiku used to appeal to the emotions of the electorates in order to support their positions. This is because appeals to pathos can persuade an electorate quickly, as in their utilization of personal stories (Atiku stories of empowering over 4600 SMSE in Adamawa State and Buhari stories of building infrastructural as PDF chairman). This finding is consistent with the emotion-based strategy that has been seen in two-party system election campaigns, such as the UK elections in 2010 (Baxter and Marcella, 2012), the US elections in 2008 (Erikson, 2008), and the US elections in 2012 (Bronstein, 2013). Additionally, Nigeria political system shares similarity with US, this explains why the findings of this study agrees with US politicians’ rhetoric and cultural values (Yarchi,

2014). But, this finding is in contrast to the Israeli's election of 2013 which emphasis the character and credibility of candidates (Samuel-Azran, Yarchi & Wolfsfeld, 2015). In summary, pathos, ethos, logos and Kairos were used as persuasive appeals by candidates in the 2019 general elections for political mobilization.

Popularity of Rhetorical Appeals

For the purpose of this study, only posts with at least 500 *likes* and 100 *shares* were counted to establish the popularity of social media posts. Tables 2, 3 and 4 present data on the popularity of social media posts sourced from candidates Facebook and Twitter pages.

Table 2: Popularity of Candidates' Rhetorical Appeal

	Ethos	Logos	Pathos	Kairos
Facebook				
Like	7,000	3000	38,000	3,500
Share	1,400	600	7,600	700
Twitter				
Like	43000	15000	172500	18000
Share	8600	3000	34500	3600

Source: Author's Field Work, 2022

From the 86 posts sourced from Facebook account of both candidates, 14 of them which dwelt on the character of candidates (ethos) had 7000 *likes* and 1400 *shares*, posts that focused on logo had 3000 *like* and 600 *shares*, pathos had 38 000 *likes* and 7600 *shares* and kairos had 3500 *likes* and 700 *shares*. According to the data in the table 2, pathos was the most common rhetorical appeal utilized by candidates in their Facebook posts during the 2019 presidential election. This is followed by pathos and kairos while logos had the least appeal. This implies that, electorates on Facebook were more swayed by emotions than logic (reasoning), credibility of speaker (candidate, Affiliates and political parties). Finding further reveal that electorates had lower significant level of concern for timing too. From the 559 posts sourced from twitter account of both candidates in the 2019 Presidential Election, ethos had 43000 *likes* and 8600 *shares*, logos had 15000 *likes* and

3000 *shares*, pathos had 172500 likes and 34500 shares while karios had 18000 *likes* and 3600 *shares*. From the data on table 2, pathos came first in the popularity of Rhetorical appeals on twitters by both candidates. Ethos came second and kairos came third while logos came last. This means that both Buhari and Atiku's posts on twitter appealed more to the emotion of the electorates, than the credibility of the candidates, the strategic timing and the logic or reason of the post. In summary, the study found that pathos-based messages of both candidates attracted likes which signifies the ability to engage social media users. The pathos-based messaging also demonstrated how social media users' sharing behavior was dominated by a distinct rhetorical appeal. It means that Atiku and Bhari who were the main candidates during the 2019 presidential election in Nigeria mainly engaged the audiences' sympathy.

Conclusion

Based on the summary, the following conclusions were made: Political candidates during the 2019 Presidential Election employed more pathos as a persuasive strategy to appeal to the electorates' emotions to evoke feelings in ways social media was used in political mobilization. This sort of appeal seeks support by offering persuasive reasons and eliciting diverse emotions about the candidate, opponents, and policy proposals. Furthermore, in addition to words or posts aimed at eliciting emotional responses from voters, candidates used ethos to represent their legitimacy or competency. The idea behind using ethical reasoning by candidates is that, users of social media are more likely to be persuaded by candidates' moral character and professional background. Politicians accomplish this by giving the electorate the impression that they are capable of alleviating their suffering and experiences, thereby making them appear as someone worthy of being entrusted with the operations of administration. However, none of the posts gave much heed to reason, evidence, or proof. Citizens participated in the 2019 general elections in Nigeria especially using their social media accounts to share and like the posts of candidates and political parties as well as generate their content by campaigning for their preferred candidates.

Recommendations

Based on the conclusion made, this study makes the following recommendations:

- i. Since logos was the least used persuasive appeal during the 2019 Presidential Election, this study recommended that politicians should use social media to engage and mobilize voters for policy development using proof, statistics and data rather than projecting their credibility and appealing to voters' emotions as a way of increasing online engagement and political participation. Findings from this study is in agreement with Bronstein's 2013 study which submits that, both Obama and Mitt Romney used more of emotional appeal to connect with followers on social media. Also, these pathos-based posts had more reactions (likes, shares and comments) implying that the emotional appeal had impact on the audience reactions to them. It also agrees with Mohan's (2019) study "Donald Trump did a very good job: A rhetorical analysis of candidate Trump's campaign speeches", which suggests that Trump used emotional appeal to connect with his audience by using fear and anger mongering, inflaming the sentiment of repression that characterised the silent majority. This shows that politicians, regardless of their geographical location and race, have found emotional appeal more effective in campaign speeches, thereby, leaving critical policy and governance issues or subjects out of campaign speeches.
- ii. Media practitioners/consultants should guide their clients (political candidates) to explore other strategies of persuasive communication to connect with the people for political follower-ship and rapport.
- iii. Social media users should learn to interrogate political campaign posts beyond the range of emotions and analyze them for logic, as emotions are capable of clouding sound reasoning.
- iv. Future political candidates should build themselves into credible people, capable of being entrusted with the responsibility of governance, rather than coming to play the "emotional card" like those before them. This is because social media is fast increasing political consciousness among users and their information dependants. Consequently, public demand for accountability and trust in politics and leadership are heightening.

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