

Transmedia and Platformized Political Discourse in a Growing Democracy: A Study of Nigeria's 2023 General Elections

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Abstract : Transmediality and platformization as online content-sharing protocols have continued to accentuate the growing impact of the unprecedented digital revolution across the world. The rapid transformation across all sectors as a result of this revolution has continued to spotlight the increasing importance of new media technologies in redefining and reshaping the rhythm and dynamics of our private and public discursive practices. Equally, social and political activities are being impacted daily through the creation and transmission of political discourse content through multi-channel platforms such as mobile telephone communication, social media networks and the internet. It has been observed that digital platforms have become central to the production, processing, and distribution of multimodal social data and cultural content. The platformization paradigm thus underpins our understanding of how digital platforms enhance the production and heterogeneous distribution of media and cultural content through these platforms and how this process facilitates socioeconomic and political activities. The use of multiple digital platforms to share and transmit political discourse material synchronously and asynchronously has gained some exciting momentum in the last few years. Nigeria's 2023 general elections amplified the usage of social media and other online platforms as tools for electioneering campaigns, socio-political mobilizations and civic engagement. The study, therefore, focuses on transmedia and platformed political discourse as a new strategy to promote political candidates and their manifesto in order to mobilize support and woo voters. This innovative transmedia digital discourse model involves a constellation of online texts and images transmitted through different online platforms almost simultaneously. The data for the study was extracted from the 2023 general elections campaigns in Nigeria between January- March 2023 through media monitoring, manual download and the use of software to harvest the online electioneering campaign material. I adopted a discursive-analytic qualitative technique with toolkits drawn from a computer-mediated multimodal discourse paradigm. The study maps the progressive development of digital political discourse in this young democracy. The findings also demonstrate the inevitable transformation of modern democratic practice through platform-dependent and transmedia political discourse. Political actors and media practitioners now deploy layers of social media network platforms to convey messages and mobilize supporters in order to aggregate and maximize the impact of their media campaign projects and audience reach.

Keywords : social media, digital humanities, political discourse, platformized discourse, multimodal discourse

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