The Media, Elections and the deployment of ICT in Nigeria's Fourth Republic

Olajide Olufunsho Ayobolu
Doctoral Student of Federal University of Lokoja, Kogi State, Nigeria
ooayobolu@gmail.com

Abstract
This article examined the role of the media in different climes especially Nigeria, during elections including the diverse intervening variables that shape the performance of the media. The article looked at the emerging role of the social media and citizen journalism, as well as appraised the pros and cons viz-a-viz the deployment of ICT. The challenges of the media were discussed and solutions proffered for all the encumbrances encountered in the line of duty. It is the descriptive and narrative method that was adopted using the secondary data. The theoretical framework used centered on media social responsibility theory. Traditional media and social media as good as they are, can be put to bad use, by devious political gladiators, particularly in this part of the world and, which can have deleterious consequences on the polity as evidently pointed out in the article and the article recommended amongst other things that there is the need to regulate the social media in the overriding interest of democracy and humanity.

Introduction
The thrust of this article is to critically examine the relationship between elections and ICT, zeroing in on the role of the media in disseminating crystal clear information in the process. In other words, in what ways does ICT help in shaping the electoral process through confidence-building and transparency, so that people do not just vote for the sake of voting but that each vote may count and precisely locate the role of the press in all of this?
To this end, this article will want to know to what extent the media are independent. How informed and properly trained the media are, to perform the duties and responsibilities expected of them. Does the media have the requisite technological know-how? Can the media read between the lines at critical moments during an election on ICT issues and make meticulous interventions that can positively impact the electoral process. What is the meeting point between the traditional and the new media? What are their areas of strength and the challenges they are confronted with? This article will similarly delve into the concept of citizen journalism with the availability and proliferation of androids phones, smartphones, tablets, digital cameras, spy cameras and phones, electorates, can actively participate in covering and reporting events as they corroborate or disprove the traditional media. Therefore, is media an all-comers affair or a specialised profession that handles election reportage with dexterity?

The role of the media with regards to the deployment of ICT in elections
The importance of the media in elections cannot be overemphasised, in fact, media, particularly new media, is part and parcel of ICT. With the consistent use of Twitter, Snapchat, Instagram, google chat, telegram, WhatsApp messenger, YouTube, WeChat, Quora, Qzone, Weibo Tumblr, Tiktok, Reddit, Baidu, Tieda, Linkedin, Pinterest, Viber, Facebook messenger and so many other platforms on a global scale. It goes without saying, therefore, that it will be pretty difficult for elections to be manipulated, this is because even before the official results are announced, the results are in the public space/domain. Hence, the combination of the traditional media and the new media have helped immensely in improving the integrity of the electoral process leading to general acceptability of election results by the people.

Election without the media is unimaginable because by doing so elections will be shrouded in secrecy where the process can easily be manipulated and the will of the people subverted. Hence, democracy will be called some other form of government other than what it is and elections will be meaningless or inconsequential. So important is the media according to Inuwa that "the media is referred to as the fourth estate of the realm, i.e. The fourth pillar in support of the essential tripod of government; the Executive, the Legislative and the judiciary. The two broad categories of media –
(a) The Print media comprises Newspapers, Magazines, Journals and periodicals and
(b) The Electronic media includes the Radio, Television and all related modern means of communication such as the computer and the Internet". (Inuwa 2007)

According to Haruna, "the media's role of informing, educating and entertaining the public takes different forms in different societies. This role is largely determined by the nature of the social and political forces in society. The role falls into two broad categories, namely the libertarian and the authoritarian. In the libertarian role, the media is free, at least in theory, of state or government ownership and control. The media in the Western World falls into this category. The authoritarian role is the opposite of the libertarian i.e., the media is owned and/or controlled by the state or government. The media in the old Soviet Union, present-day China, the Russian Republic and Cuba

and many of the Third World countries fall into this category. In many other Third World countries, however, there is a mix of the two, i.e. private media sitting side by side with state or government-controlled media. Nigeria is an example of this admixture. The theory of the libertarian media assumes that man is a rational being who can decide wisely for himself, provided he has accurate and adequate information. The mass media, in this case, is obliged by convention, if not by law, to provide fair, balanced and accurate information that will enable their readers and listeners to make sensible decisions".(Haruna 2007).

The media naturally should serve only public interest, what determines public interest may be amorphous, but safety and security are principal elements of communal interest. The security of the nation and its people can be said to be a staple of *shared* interests. Therefore, national interest is a subset of public interest. To serve the public interest is to preserve the nation's interest and security. (The Cable.ng 11th July, 2021).

Furthermore, it has been argued that the Nigerian media is one that is somewhat politically governed. Some media organizations are owned by politically exposed persons who are in different political parties. Those media organizations are sometimes deployed to fight political battles, compromising the sanctity of information, whose interest will these agencies naturally serve; their patrons or Nigeria? This is the dilemma. (The cable.ng).
It is very clear, therefore, that the role of the media is to inform, educate, entertain as well as set an agenda. The media has a watchdog role as well as a gatekeeper function. The media can aid public involvement through advocating issues and transferring knowledge, skills and technologies to the people. Inuwa (2007) pointed out some factors that *restrains* the functions of the media which includes draconian and obnoxious laws, lack of adequate remuneration, corruption and lack of self-censorship.

According to Aghamelu (2014)," the role of the media in any democratic society is to educate, to inform and entertain people however, they have to be vigilant watchdogs of public interest and under no special circumstances should they demean themselves into acting as lapdogs for establishment. Even in very normal and placid times, the media is expected to be a keen observer, alert and concerned even though non-intruding and non-partisan in governance".
Fatoba (2012), argued that the duties of the mass media extend to the following:
1. The press keeps the people and government informed.
2. The press provides a means of communication among the people.
3. The press serves as watchdog on the activities of government, government officials and members of the public in general.
4. The press provides a voice for the people by giving the strong, weak, rich, poor, young, and old the right to express their views irrespective of how primitive, sensible or irrational the view may be.
5. The press is a trend setter as a medium for socialization and social engineering.
6. The press is a market for the presentation of ideas and opinion.
7. The press is a vehicle for change.
8. The press is a medium of enormous influence on people's views, attitudes, judgments, lifestyles and values.
9. The press is a means of entertainment and relaxation.
10. The press helps the people in the making of an informed decision.

It is important to note that the internet has produced several means of communication that perform vital tasks in disseminating news and information to the global audience, the social media has the power to alter messages and convey messages to achieve a particular end. The role of social media in which almost everybody participates in elections and politics have become ubiquitous and public knowledge in which everybody participates and expresses an opinion, that is why public perception is also very important in election results and outcomes. However, it is imperative to underscore the fact that Candidates and Parties have an explicit right to provide the electorate information regarding their attributes, political agendas, and proposed plans. Besides meeting directly with members of the electorate, candidates and parties accomplish this task through campaigns via media. It is paramount to democratic electoral processes therefore, that all candidates and parties are provided equal access to media for this endeavour.

Candidates and parties use the mass media for campaigning through sponsored direct access spots, paid political advertising, televised debates, use of social media, and other mechanisms. They also hope the media will voluntarily cover them because of the newsworthiness of their campaign activities. Political parties expend vast human and financial resources on planning and executing mass media campaigns. The NDI Political Campaign Planning Manual gives an idea of the extent of organisation involved. The media have several roles in realising contestants' right to campaign: To create a level playing field is the first role. This entails equal access to state broadcasters and other state resources: Among the most effective, but least analyzed, means of autocratic survival is an uneven playing field. In countries like Botswana, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Malaysia, Malawi, Mozambique,

Senegal, Singapore, Tanzania, and Venezuela, democratic competition is undermined less by electoral fraud or repression than by unequal access to state institutions, resources, and the media. An uneven playing field is less evident to outside observers than is electoral fraud or repression, but it can have a devastating impact on democratic competition. Levelling the campaign playing field is one of the main justifications for regulation of media during elections. (https://aceproject.org/ace-en/topics/me).

Theoretical framework
Generally, the philosophy of social responsibility of the media is an extension of libertarian philosophy in that the media recognise their responsibility to resolve conflicts through discussion and to promote public opinion, private rights, and important social interests. Social responsibility is majorly premised on the ground that freedom carries concomitant obligations. While a responsible journalistic practice is a bulwark to societal progress, the press still carries the burden to ensure that their activities are guided by ethical requirements at all times. But the snag lies with the subjective interpretation and the obsession by the government as to what constitutes social responsibility of the press. To the government, the press is socially responsible when it nurtures their comfort zones; when it reports on issues that make them feel at ease rather than a form of reportage that rattles and keeps them on toes. Obagwu P.U & Kabiru M.I (2019)

From the notion of Social responsibility, Melisande (2009) posits that the press is accountable in four ways:
- To the audiences, to whom they own correct news reportage, analysis and editorializing.
- To the government to which they owe constructive criticism, a relay of popular opinion and adequate feedback from the populace;
- To the owner, to whom they owe the survival of the media organization as a business venture as well as a veritable source of education, enlightenment and entertainment;
- To themselves, to whom they owe fulfillment in their calling, satisfaction and an entire success story

Melisande (2009:4) identifies five guidelines for a socially responsible press the Commission came up with in its report titled; A Free and Responsible Press:
- A truthful, comprehensive, and intelligent account of the day's events in a context which give them meaning;
- A forum for the exchange of comments and criticisms;
- The projection of a representative picture of the constituent groups in the society;
- The presentation and clarification of the goals and values of the society;
- Full access to the day's intelligence.

It is very clear therefore that it is a media that can genuinely uphold the ethics of the profession, by genuinely being a watchdog and a gatekeeper is the one that can be socially responsible. Thus, during elections, the media is expected to be as objective as possible; and their reportage should not be tainted by emotions, sentiments and unfounded allegations. Events and situations must be reported just as it is without any form or iota of colourations.

Role of the media in elections using ICT tools from around the world
According to Dzisah "Facebook and Twitter are noted to be the two most popular social media platforms according to Pew Research Center. Lately, the importance of social media has been predominantly emphasised in politics, due to the fact that the use of social networking sites (Facebook) and microblogging services (Twitter) are thought to have the propensity to positively induce political participation. The Obama presidential campaign sought to create a whole new political constituency online, raising about half a billion dollars through online platforms such as Facebook. The campaign, which was run on 15 social media sites, produced 2,000 official videos which were viewed 80 million times on YouTube alone and generated about 244,000 unofficial video responses. What is even more intriguing is that the 2008 United States presidential elections remain in history for the unparalleled use of social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube". (Dzisah 2018)

Furthermore, Elchahabi (2015) harped on the fact that "Free media have long been recognized as a cornerstone of democracy and play an important role in influencing political discourse during elections. When free and balanced, traditional media (print and broadcast) foster transparency and the dissemination of important electoral information. The rise of new media – such as social media sites, blogs, email and other new media platforms – provides further avenues and possibilities for participatory citizenship, information and knowledge sharing, and inclusion and empowerment. Both traditional and new media can play a vital watchdog role and serve as a campaign platform, a forum for public debate and as a public educator, ultimately strengthening democracy. Recognizing the evolving role of media in elections, the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) has increasingly employed new media in its programming to support credible and transparent elections".

In a related development, Elchahabi (2015) stressed that "according to a 2014 Pew Research Centre Survey, 16 per cent of registered American voters used social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter to get political information and follow election news during the 2014 U.S. midterm elections, more than doubling the number of registered voters who used social media for the same purpose in 2010. Additionally, more and more Americans are also using cell phones to follow political news, with 28 per cent of registered voters having done so in 2014". Moreover, Elchahabi (2015) observed that "When Narenda Modi was sworn in as Prime Minister of India on May 26, 2014, he was the second most "liked" politician on Facebook in the world, trailing only President Obama. We saw a trend, we read this trend, where the youth of the country were embracing social media as their first tool when they started using the Internet, and we made sure our presence was there, said Arvind Guptahead, head of the social media campaign for Modi's party. In Nigeria's recent general elections, both major presidential candidates and their parties maintained active Twitter and Facebook accounts and the Independent National Electoral Commission proactively engaged with citizens on social media to address inquiries related to the electoral process. Social media is widely credited with playing a major role in promoting transparency ahead of the vote that led to the first election of an opposition candidate for president in Nigeria's 2015 election. According to Sumandeep (2016), "social media has influenced many aspects of our life be it education, culture, administration, marketing, business or politics. The technology revolution which is known as internet has changed the world by connecting people across the globe. Today youth is increasingly using number of social sites such as Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, Blog and LinkedIn as platforms for communicating with friends, family and colleagues. Social media's quick development shows its influence on society. It is a crucial part of the advancement of information and communication technologies. Social media has been able to make profound impact by means of news, interaction, learning and marketing. Various news channels and tweet provide updates on significant happenings all over the world. The news quickly gets passed around the networks in ways never experienced before. People in different cities, countries and continents can keep in touch effortlessly and social media creates an opportunity to experience different cultures and exchange opinions. It has become a significant part of modern civilisation. It is changing existing information behaviour by giving users access to real-time online information channels without the constraints of time and space".

According to Ayeni (2019) Social media in Nigeria has become a prominent and a powerful forum for voter enlightenment, political activism and fastest means of information dissemination. Social media platforms, such as Instagram, Twitter, Facebook and YouTube help to activate citizens' engagement in political life. The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) saddled with the responsibility of educating voters on their electoral roles and responsibilities unfortunately doesn't have a pronounced presence in the social space.

The importance of this position is that the media can be positively deployed in such a way that it will help to creditably shape the outcome of an election in such a way that it will foster peace, common sense of belongingness and legitimacy in any given social milieu or formation, thereby contributing immensely and positively to the integrity of the electoral process.

The flip side of the media in relation to ICT and elections with concrete examples
It is imperative to underscore the fact that the media can be manipulated to play a negative role in the electoral process, which raises the question of how independent or free the media is or can be. While government-owned media might be the mouthpiece of the government in power, as he who pays the piper dictates the tune, thereby promoting the power of incumbency, privately-owned media outfits can equally be constraints by the vested interest of the ownership structure who may have more than a passing curiosity or concern in the political cum electoral goings-on. These positions deviate from the traditional role of the media to accurately inform, educate and entertain the generality of the public. It calls to question the watchdog, gatekeeper and knowledge incubator roles of the media.

It is exactly the point Elchahabi (2015) was making when he explained that "the media can also play a dramatically negative role in the electoral process. Many observers often point to the role media played during the 2007 Kenyan presidential election and the subsequent outbreak of violence, which led to 1,133 people killed and more than 600,000 Kenyans driven from their homes, as a prominent example of the negative effects media can have during elections. A private or biased media can shape elections and issue coverage to support corporate interests or provide propaganda for authoritarian regimes, subverting important democratic principles like freedom of speech and the press".

These assertions are further corroborated by Olaniran and Williams (2020) when they explained that "social media platforms have become fertile ground for fake news and propaganda as evidenced in the 2016 US presidential election. BuzzFeed found that false election stories from hoax sites and hyper-partisan blogs generated more engagement than content from real news sites during the last three months of the election and post-election. Users shared false stories such as that Pope Francis endorsed Donald Trump and/or that Hillary Clinton sold weapons

to ISIS. These stories and others were shared (e.g. retweeted) hundreds of thousands of times. More importantly, another report found that users were not interested in any news that disagreed or deviated from their accepted premises. Subsequently, people continued to actively seek and present false information as long as it supported their respective viewpoints".

In addition, Olaniran and Williams posited that "Twitter, for example, has increasingly been used in political elections of nation-states and in the spread of ideologies such as displayed in the Brexit movement and the 2016 US presidential election. Additionally, web-based botnets represent a significant number of Twitter traffic. To this end, propaganda and misinformation appear to be the norm in social media networks such as Twitter and Facebook. *Social media bots* (i.e., botnets, bots) are designed to manipulate the passage, transfer, and volume of the social narrative, which makes them ideal for the spread of homogeneity, as opposed to diversity, within their message. This inherent functionality is why bots are frequently used to spread beliefs (e.g., populism) and computational propaganda. Message distribution via botnets is popular due to the fanaticism of select users who demonstrate an insatiable desire to consume and redistribute information despite the source. Many of these messages carry divisive narratives that tend to transform civic engagement into dichotomies, pitting one group of people against another without allowing for consensus or compromise. Furthermore, fake news websites and bots attract traffic and drive engagement. Collectively, they aim to influence conversations and demobilize opposition through false support". (Olaniran and Williams 2020).

Fake news is a problem, like it is in every part of the world. I think that we have a particular problem in Nigeria because of a deep-seated mistrust for the government or indeed any form of authority. This mistrust has been cultivated over decades of being lied to and bullied by authority figures for many years. Nigerian media was controlled by government and still is to a large degree. The media served as a propaganda tool for different governments, from the military era to of course, the now seemingly democratic era. Its still used as a major form of control. (The Cable.ng 1st May, 2021). If not for the private print media that is, newspapers, magazines, Nigerians would all have become zombies. (The Cable.ng 24th July 2021).

In a related vein, Stuart (2019) argued that there are myriad benefits from social media, like its use during the revolutions of the Arab Spring to put pressure on governments and spread truth in the face of propaganda. But there are three primary problems: misleading or inaccurate stories used to influence elections, misleading or inaccurate stories used to foment violence, and the more tangential effect on violence that results when people with extreme views find amplification and validation of those views on social media.

Therefore, Reisach (2021) reckons that "influences of viral disinformation are reported from Brazil, Pakistan and Mexico. In the "Global South", WhatsApp plays a huge role in political campaiging. This messenger App is frequently used in Africa, South America, and Southeast Asia because it is free of charge and seemingly "personal". For rural areas without WiFi but a telephone network, WhatsApp offers a chance to communicate, and for (political) advertisers is a formidable tool, because voters can be reached through their telephone numbers. In less developed countries, telephone numbers can be purchased and sold, by telecommunication providers or by advertisers, event managers, local associations, groups, influencers and private persons. Telecoms offer their services for free (called "zero-rating") if users exclusively use Facebook or WhatsApp. This facilitates the targeted dissemination of "state-sponsored WhatsApp content" as well as propaganda in large groups. The circumstances in Africa, Brazil and India do not raise hope for a well-informed usage and electoral decision-making".

However, the point must be made that today, the Nigerian Communications Commission estimates that there are almost 150 million internet users in Nigeria. Active social media users – excluding about 90 million WhatsApp users – are estimated at approximately 32 million as of January 2022, based on data compiled by DataReportal, an online reference library. This includes about 26 million Facebook users, 9 million on Instagram, 6 million on LinkedIn, and 9.5 million on Snapchat. The potential audience Twitter says theirs ads can reach in Nigeria is 4.25 million. More significantly, compared with the rest of the world, the average Nigerian social media denizen spends a lot more time on social media – about 4 hours daily. With more than a third of the voting population spending copious amounts of time on social media, it is only logical that politicians take their messaging to where the people are. (https://ng.boell.org/en/2022/10/26/bots-and-biases-role-social-media-nigerias-elections).

Similarly, Citizens use social media platforms to give daily reports and updates regarding election circumstances. In recent times, ordinary Nigerians have monitored electoral situations in real-time across the country. They have tagged relevant bodies such as Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), security agencies, news channels, international organisations, etc. via social media platforms to take action. A good example is the recent 2022 Osun State gubernatorial election. INEC, security agencies and other relevant organisations were instantly responding to queries made by ordinary citizens on social media platforms. This has positioned social media as

an important instrument in the hands of citizens to ensure electoral integrity in the country. (https://ng.boell.org/en/2022/10/26/bots-and-biases-role-social-media-nigerias-elections). However, it has also been suggested that currently, the number of active social media users in Nigeria has risen from 27 million in 2019, to 36 million ahead of the 2023 elections. Given the challenge of prevailing misinformation and disinformation on social media platforms, and the way such disinformation can permeate into the media more generally, greater access to online information does not necessarily create more informed citizens. (Premium Times February, 2023). In a related development, it has been said that the 2023 general election in Nigeria saw a new dimension different from the usual, due to the active role of social media. According to the Nigerian Communication Commission (NCC), Nigeria has registered about 156 million active internet subscribers in February 2023 representing over half of the country's population. This implies that a good number of Nigerians have now tapped into different social media platforms. The media platforms have been identified as a key factor that has changed the way politics and elections used to be, bringing everyone together to participate and share their opinion freely. (Businessday April, 9th, 2023).

Therefore, social media if not properly managed and regulated can be more of a curse than blessing, as vividly shown above. In the same vein, it can be a veritable means of deepening democracy, enhancing integrity of the electoral process and evolving a formidable electoral participation process.

Media Performance during Elections in Nigeria
One critical factor that influences the performance of the media has to do with funding for survival. Currently, there are only two models of survival in the media industry in Nigeria. First, by depending on government's subvention and secondly relying on advertisers to survive. And going by the dynamics of new information and communication technologies, things are completely changing. Things are no longer the same, the more they fail, the media organizations appear recharged and desperate. This will definitely reflect in the quality of media production and content. (The Guardian 2nd May, 2021). To survive in the market place the press has to satisfy the preferences of its customers. Precisely speaking the press gives its readers only what wants (Ahakare 2019).
A report of the (EU) Election Observation Mission in respect of the 2003 general elections noted that media performance during the Nigerian elections was flawed, as it failed to provide unbiased, fair and informative coverage of political parties and candidates contesting the elections. Federal and State owned media were biased in favour of parties and candidates in power.

On the 2007 elections, it was noted that the Nigerian Press does have a code of conduct that would be expected to guide news media editorial policy at all times including election season. Decision about code of conduct should be made in conjunction with the press. However, in a press conference held in early January 2007, the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) the Director General (DG) added directives that the media have interpreted as "warnings" rather than guidelines to facilitate public understanding of issues at stake in the 2007 elections. But it is unclear how NBC proposes to enforce the listed warnings. (https://www.refworld.org/pdfid/4753d3ce0.pdf).

Oboh (2016) pointed out that the editorial position of the Nigerian mass media on the credibility of the results of the 2007 elections was capable of creating conflict in the Nigerian polity. The study noted that the Nigerian newspapers spent more time reporting on the crises that occurred during the elections without any attempt to suggest the possible ways to solve the problem of electoral irregularities in the Nigerian polity. This development tends to contradict the tenets of the social responsibility press theory that imposes on the media the commitment to social responsibility being the aftermath of the review of the concept of a free press.

In the case of the 2015 general elections, Olowojolu (2016) argued that the 2015 general elections were adjudged to have been successful by local and international observers. Going forward, this paper is of the view that institutions such as the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC), Nigerian Press Council (NPC) and Advertising Practitioners Council of Nigeria (APCON) should become more proactive in the censorship of the political campaigns of politicians. These agencies can engage aspiring candidates and political parties by training and re-orientating them on democratic values. Additionally, the leadership of the political parties should ensure that there is internal party discipline that will curb the excesses of party members that sponsor hate campaigns.

Sule (2020) said one of the significant achievements of the 2019 General Election is the fair play process in the preparation and campaign process for both the ruling and opposition parties. Although, there were some outcries on the side-lining of the opposition from the public-owned media outlet, still the reports from domestic and international observers revealed that a fair play process is enabled which gave advantage for the parties to sell their manifestoes adequately. The private and independent media both printed and electronic were not meddled with or prevented from providing a space for all parties and contestants to air their views, criticisms and campaign

finances. This fate has been a dilemma in the 2015 General Election in which both the public and private media outlets were impeded from opening up for the opposition to sell their manifestoes and reach the voters. This is commendable in the 2019 Election and it should be improved in the future.

Beyond the 2023 general elections in Nigeria, beyond the election cycle, beyond the winners and losers, beyond the political pundits, how do we fare in the years before and after the elections? Within the ambit of these posers is where this paper is situated. The question that is hardly asked in the Nigerian polity is whether democracy is just the period of electioneering campaigns and slogans or whether in the interregnum, the four-year period of governance is irrelevant to the entire democratic process.

In seeking answers to these questions, in the pursuit of good governance, accountability, citizen participation, and other related democratic nuances, especially beyond the electoral cycle where the media makes an entrance.
The media is a powerful compass. A knowledge and moral compass, a directional and opinion compass. All over the world the media is and will remain a veritable mirror that "strives to show us the bare truth and harsh realities of life. (Daily Trust 25th December, 2022).

The Nigerian media code of election coverage as put forward by INEC entails the following. The responsibility of media organisations
• A media organisation shall ensure accurate and impartial voter education on parties, candidates, registration, verification, voting centres, voting procedures, complaint procedures, etc as provided by relevant agencies;
• A media organisation shall disseminate voter education in indigenous languages and through messages that target under-represented groups including women, youths and People Living with Disabilities;
• A media organisation shall uphold the right of the people to free expression by providing opportunity for ordinary citizens to express their views during electoral processes. (https://inecnigeria.org).
But the question is, to what extent have the different media organizations complied with these standing orders? And what has INEC done to deal with erring media organizations and put in place a robust mechanism to make these codes implementable with infractions?

Conclusion
ICT is very important to enhance electoral integrity but there are inherent limitations that have been highlighted above, and the variegated dynamics as well as the role, importance and task that the media can play, both positive and negative have equally been noted. Social media is here to stay, with its dangers as well as benefits. These problems must be addressed by social media sites and by the government, but with care not to destroy the freedom of speech that social media epitomizes. The government must not be high-handed in trying to sanitize the conduct and practice of social media and neither must the government put in place draconian or obnoxious laws as they would defeat democratic ethos and the very purpose of democratic system of government.
Today in Nigeria, the traditional media has been compromised because of poor remuneration and political disposition of the ownership structure as well as the quantum of advertisement made available or given to media houses. Hence, the objectivity of their reportage is subject to and determined by where they get constant inflow of funds from, to oil and fund their daily operations. Hence, there is the need for emphasises to be placed on having credible, independent and well-trained people to be able to discharge their responsibility particularly during election periods. In our clime too, many journalists are not savvy or adept in digital journalism and this has elicited their inability to deploy ICT essential tools appropriately to give correct reportage. Therefore, there is the need to train and retrain media practitioners to be able to carry out their duties without let or hindrances.

References
Aghamelu F. C (2014), The Role of Mass Media in the Nigeria Electoral Process, UJAH: UNIZIK
    Journal Of Arts & Humanities 14(2):154. http:/dx.doi.org/10.4314/ujah.v4i2.8

Ahakare C.O, (2019), Media Censorship and the Government. GNOSI: An Interdisciplinary
    Journal of Human Theory & Praxis, Vol. 2 (1). ISSN ONLINE: 2714-2485

Ayeni T.P. (2019), The Role of Social Media in Voters Education in Nigeria, Scientific Journal of
    Research and Reviews ISSN: 2687-8097.

Dzisah W. S. (2018), Social media and elections in Ghana: Enhancing democratic participation.
    African Journalism Studies, 39:1, 27-47, DOI: 10:1080/23743670: 2018.1452774.

Elchahabi .S. (2015), "The evolving role of media in election". ifes.org

Fatoba, W.O. (2012). Media Law and Ethics in Nigeria, A Comparative Analysis, Second Edition, ISBN 978-32781-8-5.

Haruna .M. (2007), The media and the Fourth Republic: The watchdog that dozed on its watch. Being text of speech on "The role of the Media in Consolidating Democratic rule in Nigeria", during the 2007 Annual Week of Northern States Chapter of Political Science Student's Association of Nigeria, ABU, Zaria.

Inuwa I. M. (2007), Role of the media in National Development, a paper presented at a workshop On the 27th Youth Leadership programme organised by LEAP Africa, at British Council, Kano, Nigeria.

https://aceproject.org/ace-en/topics/me

https://inecnigeria.org

https://ng.boell.org/en/2022/10/26/bots-and-biases-role-social-media-nigerias-elections

https://www.refworld.org/pdfid/4753d3ce0.pdf

Melisanda, M. (2009) Social Responsibility in the Media, Oxford: Centre for International Media Ethnics CIME

Obagwu P. U, & Kabiru M. I, (2019), Social Responsibility Theory of the Press: A Critique of its Application and Constraints, International Journal of Innovative Research and Development, Vol. 8, Issue 12. ISSN 2278-0211

Oboh, G. E (2016), Reflecting on the Nigeria Media, Elections & the African Democracy, SAGE Open, July-September 2016: 1-10. DOI: 10.1177/2158244016666886

Olaniran .B. & Williams. I. (2020), Social Media Effects: Hijacking and Civility in Civil Engagement in Platform, in Protests and the Challenge of Networked Democracy, Nature Publishing Group retrieved from http: ncbi. Nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/ pmc 7343248/#_ffn_sectitle

Reisach. U. (2021), The Responsibility of Social Media in Times of Societal and Political Manipulation, European Journal of Operational Research, Vol. 291, Issue 3, pgs. 906- 917

Stuart. A. H, (2019), Social Media, Manipulation and Violence. South Carolina Journal of International law and Business, Volume 15, Issue 2 Spring, Article 7.

Sule B, Adamu U & Sambo U, (2020), The 2019 General Election in Nigeria: Examining the Issues, Challenges, Successes and Lessons for Future General Elections, International Journal of Social Sciences Perspective, Vol. 6, No. 2, pp. 100-113. ISSN: 2577-7750. DOI: 10.33094/7.2017.2020.62.100.113

Sumandeep K. P. (2016), Social Media: Political Campaigns & Elections, Madhya Pradesh Journal of Social Science, Vol. 21, Issue 2

Newspapers
The Cable.ng 1st May, 2021
The Guardian 2nd May, 2021
The Cable.ng 11th July, 2021
The Cable.ng 24th July, 2021
Daily Trust 25th December, 2022
Premium Times 17th February, 2023
Businessday 9th April, 2023