

The Blogosphere and Political News in Nigeria: A Content Study of the Contributions of Linda Ikeji's Blog to the Journaling of the 2015 Presidential Election Results

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ABSTRACT: The 2015 Elections in Nigeria is one of the most significant events in Nigerian history; at least in the recent past. Nigerians were highly disposed to the electioneering process by their active participation especially through the platforms provided by the social media. Hence, various social media outlets formulated dependable avenues for the sharing of news items connected with the elections. Among the numerous blogs that excelled in journaling the election is Linda Ikeji's blog; a popular blog site in Nigeria. This exposition focuses on the contributions of Linda Ikeji's blog in the dissemination the news of the elections results. The study adopts a content analysis approach to analyze the readership of the blog within election period. The subsequent feedback from the content research aids the researcher to gauge the contributions of Linda Ikeji blog in political news journaling during the 2015 General Elections in Nigeria.

KEY WORDS: Lind Ikeji Blog, Social Media, 2015 Elections, Political News.

1. Introduction

According to the Nigerian National Broadband Plan (Presidential Committee on Broadband 2014), mobile internet penetration reached the rate of 32.9% in 2013.

Leveraging on the mobile internet, social media and social networking gradually took the communication landscape by storm and rendered most Nigerians who are now netizens to develop conscious and unconscious political antennae and thus become opinion builders in the political agora.

Apart from Twitter, Facebook, Youtube, and LinkedIn, which according to a study by Terragon Group Nigeria, are the most frequently visited and used sites by Nigerians, blogging has grown to be another trending phenomenon in social communication. There are currently many blogs and their respective bloggers from news to fashion, from religion to gossip, from entertainment and lifestyles to education. All these and more make up the “new realm” within the new media planet called the blogosphere. This study examines the contributions of blogging or more technically, the blogosphere in the journaling of political news in the 2015 Elections in Nigeria. More pointedly, it looks at the contributions and involvement of Linda Ikeji’s blog site within the period.

1.1 Background to the Study

The media remains the most characteristic phenomenon at the politically charged atmosphere as most Nigerians subscribe to the conventional and social media in Nigeria for real-time updates. Beyond the traditional media, the social media with the quality of “nowness” (Zeller and Hermida 2015) excelled in political news reportage with the dissemination of the results of the General Elections through the various platforms which included but not restricted to blogs.

This work seeks to understand blogosphere as a journaling platform and its unique utility as a means of communication. It specifically examines the nature and character of blogging in Nigeria with a focus on Linda Ikeji’s blog which is one of the most widely read blogs in Nigeria. And more intensely, the study intends to analyze the contribution of the blog in the journaling of the 2015 Elections in Nigeria.

1.2 Significance of the Study

Blogs and blogging have taken productive spaces in the communication landscape in the recent past. They are among the technologies that indicate changes in the way information is created, managed, and exchanged (Armstrong and Retterer 2008). This study is significant as it undertakes an analysis of the art of blogging on the one side and audience response to blog contents on the other side. It is also a relevant study on Linda Ikeji’s blog which is on a rapid readership expansion in Nigeria and beyond.

1.3 Scope and delimitation of the Study

The study takes an overview of the blogosphere as a blossoming social media landscape. It, however, delimits itself to Linda Ikeji's blog as a research focus. It further examines the political blogging of Linda Ikeji's blog and more specifically as it affected the 2015 General Elections in Nigeria. The study population exclusively involve visitors to the blog who are designated and known as LIB readers.

1.4 Study Methodology

The study uses the content analysis research approach. Content analysis is a method of analyzing written, verbal or visual communication messages. The research method of content analysis could be qualitative or quantitative (Elo and Kyngas 2008). The study tries to quantify the political news content of Linda Ikeji's blog during the elections (Cole 1988).

2. Definition of the Basic Terms

2.1 Social Media

Social Media are the new tools of communication with internet connectivity that enable the instant sharing of information. Social media also refer to: "a group of Internet-based applications that build on Web 2.0 and allows the creation and exchange of user-generated content" (Kaplan and Haenlein 2010). More succinctly put, social media refer to those digital tools for the sharing of conversation and content (Gould 2015). The fundamental reason behind social media development and expansion is connectivity and networking. In other words, social media exist to connect people to people be it as friends or as a way like-minded people could form a community. Beyond the latter, social media serve: "to connect people to ideas, journalists to breaking news, business to customers, politicians to citizens, employees to jobs, consumers to advertisers, students to teachers, content to revenue and the global to the local" (Albarran 2013).

2.2 Blogosphere

The definition of the blogosphere would first take us to understanding what a blog is all about. A straightforward definition of a blog sees it as a frequently updated online

diary or journal that appears in reverse chronology. Blogging is the virtual (online) form of personal diary or journal which, unlike the conventional personal diary or journal, is open to the public to access (I-ping, Yi-hsuan and Yu-chi 2013).

The blogosphere as a term is relatively new. It refers to the social universe where blogs exist and interact. In a more explicative way, it deals with the media landscape where blogs exist as interactive sources of information. Describing the commonality of all blogs and their affinity in the blogosphere, Alex Newson (2008) maintains that blogs have links to other websites.

2.3 Blogging in the 21st. Social Media Century

Blogging has rapidly grown from being a novelty in social media landscape to being a culture in the social communication space. According to some studies, blogging started with Links.net in 1994, which was a creation of Justin Hall, a Swarthmore College student (Chapman 2011).

By 1997 the word “weblog” (logging into the web) came about and had been attributed to Jorn Barger following his earlier blog *Robot Wisdom* (Zantal-Wierna 2017). However, the first formal blog on a conventional news site came with Jonathan Dubé’s Hurricane Bonnie which was for Charlotte Observer.

Subsequent years saw the rapid growth and expansion of the blogging as an aspect of the social media and covering various aspects of life and disposition. In what follows, Vangie Beal (2007) provides a comprehensive list of the development of blogging or the blogosphere:

Table 1. Timeline of notable Blogging Events (1994-2006)

DATE	EVENT
1994, January	Justin Hall, a Swarthmore College student, creates what is considered to be the very first blog “Links.net.” Some industry trackers cite the first blog as belonging to David Winer, “Scripting News” (1997).
1997, December	Jorn Barger coins the term Weblog.
1998, October	Open Diary is founded.
1999, April	Peter Merholz shortens Weblog to blog.
1999, July	The first free weblog tool launches (Pitas).
1999, August	Pyra releases Blogger.
2002, February	Dooeed” is coined.
2002, August	Gizmodo launches.

2003, February	Google buys Blogger from Pyra (1 million blogger users, with 200,000 active).
2003, June	Google launches AdSense and incorporates matching ads to blog content.
2003, July	MySpace launches.
2003, August	TypePad (blogging and hosting service) starts.
2004, December	MSN Spaces starts (which ties in MSN Messenger and Hotmail services with blogging).
2005, March	AOL launches its RED Blogs service, aimed at the teen segment.
2005, July	News Corp buys Intermix Media (owner of Myspace.com) for \$580 million.
2005, October	AOL buys blog publisher Weblogs Inc. (\$25 million).
2005, August	TypePad launches TypePad Mobile (mobile blogging tools).
2005, November	Andrew Sullivan moves his popular blog "Daily Dish" to Time.com. Time gets advertising revenues from the blog and Sullivan is paid a fee for his services.
2005, November	DigitalGrit launches its Business Blog Service.
2006, June	eBay launches user blogs at its eBay Live! conference.
2006, August	Google pays \$900 million in shared revenue to be the exclusive search provider for MySpace.com.

Between 2006 and 2017, blogging has attained a tremendous height. According to Brandon Gaille (2017), there are about 152 million active blogs on the internet, and the number is adding on a daily basis and blogging has become a lucrative business (Rich and Entrepreneur 2014, 23).

2.4 Linda Ikeji's Blog

Linda Ifeoma Ikeji was born on the 19th of September 1980 and raised in a Catholic family from Nkwere in Imo State, Nigeria. The one-time model studied the English language at the University of Lagos, Lagos State Nigeria. After graduation, Linda started blogging actively in 2006 with BellaNaija. She later started her blogging site in December 2010 using the "Blogger" platform.

Linda Ikeji's blog, also known as LIB, features news, entertainment, fashion, lifestyle, sports, religion, gossips and indeed everything. It is one of the most visited blogs in Nigeria having younger people as the target audience. The blog was shut down on

October 8, 2014, but restored on 10 October 2014 around midnight by Google for some reasons which some attributed to infringement of intellectual property; however, Google did not make it explicit (Onyinye 2014).

In 2016, Linda Ikeji launched “Linda Ikeji Social,” (LIS) a social networking site that gives a similar interactivity like facebook. According to Kazeem (2016), the site rewards committed users from the advertisement revenue. Another on-coming feat is the launch of Linda Ikeji TV which is already streaming online.

Linda Ikeji’s blog received the Nigeria Blog Awards NBA that took place in 2013 under Best Entertainment Blog category. Linda Ikeji’s blog (<https://www.lindaikejisblog.com/>) has a total of 2,933,543 profile views on 21st October 2015.

3. Blogging as diffusion of ideas

Everett Rogers popularized the diffusion theory in the mid-1990s. In his epoch-making book, *Diffusion of Innovations*, Rogers says that diffusion is the process by which members particular community adopt an innovation. He further identifies four factors that influence adoption of an innovation:

1. the innovation itself,
2. the communication channels used to spread information about the innovation,
3. time, and
4. the nature of the society to whom it is introduced.

Innovation has to do with the introduction of new realities and values in the society or the recreation of existing phenomena (Rogers 1995, 41).

Blogging is an innovation within the social media landscape. Diffusion research, due to its broad scope, has helped to increase our understanding of the adoption process for a wide range of innovations, from ideas to social networking sites (Atkin, Hunt, and Lin 2015, 624).

4. Blogosphere and 2015 General Elections in Nigeria

There are numerous bloggers in Nigeria though most of them are still coming up in the blogosphere. Our attention is directed here at political bloggers who operate within the scope of the general characteristics of social media and which includes but not

restricted to: participation, openness, conversation, community, and connectedness (Mayfield 2008). The table below shows some notable blogs that took foregrounds during the elections. Notably, some of them are not by disposition political. There is no particular chronology.

Table 2. Notable Nigerian blogs

Name of bloggers	Blog Sites
Linda Ikeji:	lindaikejisblog.com
Omoyele Sowore	Saharareporters.com
Seun Osewa	nairaland.com
Uche Eze	Bellanaija.com
Noble Igwe	360nobs.com
Chude Jideonwo	YNaija.com
Loy Okezie	Techloy.com
Mola Ogundele	Notjustok.com
Bamidele Onibalusi	wonderkid.com
Jide Ogunsanya	Ogbongeblog.com
Don Caprion	Doncaprio.com
Oladunni Liadi	ladunliadi.blogspot.com
Japheth Omojuwa	omojuwa.com
Stella Dimakorkus	Stelladimokokorkus.com
Vanguard Newspaper	Vanguardngr.com
Punch Newspaper	Punchng.com
Laila	LailasBlog.com
Makinde Azeez	Naijaloaded.com
Daily Post	Dailypostng.com
Premium times	premiumtimesng.com
This Day Newspaper	thisdaylive.com

4.1 Linda Ikeji's Blog and the Journaling the 2015 Elections in Nigeria

The Presidential election in Nigeria was moved from the 14th day of February 2015 to the 28th of March 2015. The reason was due to the electoral commission's inability to perfect the functionality of the electoral card readers that the commission sets out to use for the first time in a Presidential Election in Nigeria (Benson and Madukwe, 2016).

Nigerians were eager to get the results of the election immediately after the polls. However, two days passed before the announcement commenced. Most people who had the benefit of power supply tuned to their radios and televisions for updates. However, a good number of netizens opened up to the exploration of the social media. Linda Ikeji's blog was exceptionally active and running from the moment of the first announcement to the declaration of the winner of the Presidential polls by the chairman of INEC Prof. Attahiru Jega. From the quantitative content analysis, a total of 263,220,000 readers visited Linda Ikeji's blog on Monday 30th March 2015 when the results started coming in their numbers from various states in Nigeria. The table below gives the breakdown.

Table 3. Showing visits to Linda Ikeji's Blog before and during the elections.

Number of Daily Visitors to the Blog (Alexa, 2015)	Number of Visitors to the Blog on Election Results Release Day	Standard Range of Daily Comments	Number of Comments on Election Results Release Day	Total number of views before the elections	Total Number of profile views during the election
243,147	263,220 20,075 visitors added	2,000	4,000 50% increase	2,297,783	2,823,344 About 10% increase

The study examined further variations on visits to the blog site before and during the election period. The analysis is what follows below.

Table 4. Further analysis on visits to Linda Ikeji's Blog before and during the elections

Daily time on Site	Daily Pageviews/person	% of Traffic from Search	Sites Linking In
Before: 7:01	Before: 3:45	Before: 3.40%	Before: 7,699
After: 12:13	After: 5:35	After: 8.00%	After: 9,050

5. Discussion and Conclusion

Our inquiry leaves us with facts that justify the prior assumption that the blogosphere was a very dependable communication arsenal during the 2015 General Elections in

Nigeria. Furthermore, the content analysis shows that Linda Ikeji's blog entertained more visits, views, and comments during the period. The study also reveals that the political news from the blog was real-time with the actual events in the political scene with regards to the polls.

The study prods for more detailed research on blogging and the blogosphere in Nigeria. Beyond the theoretical stance on the diffusion of innovations, there would be a need to consider audiences' use and gratification of the blogosphere in Nigeria or put in another way, what readers seek in the blogosphere as active and reasonable social media users. There is thus a possible call for a more comprehensive and expansive study on blogging and the blogosphere as well as further research on the future of political blogging.

What is left to be said could be an insight into the sources of the contents that feature on the blogs and the veracity of such sources. Verifying content sources would guide voracious blog readers to chew the material with caution. Critical analysis of content sources is most desirable in our day and age of fake news.

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