

## **PARTY SYSTEM AND MEDIA CONTENT**

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### **Abstract**

The researchers examined the relationship between party systems and media content while focusing on how media narratives affect the perception, growth and election success of the political party in Nigeria. Using a mixed approach, the study examines how both positive and negative media coverage tend to shape and create a reputation for political parties and their development. Data were collected and analysed from 200 respondents and statistical analyses, including t tests were conducted to verify hypotheses. Opinions from respondents showed that media content has a significant impact on the perception of political parties in the Nigeria, with respondents agreeing that media content play a crucial role in shaping their notion of party's credibility. Moreover, the findings also show that lack of media representation has a negative impact on the growth and development of political parties especially when publicity is given to opposing party or other parties. These conclusions are in line with existing literature on the role of defining the media agenda (McComb's & Shaw, 1972) and the influence of the media on political success by Isengard & Simon (2000). The study exposes the need for political parties to develop strategic media engagement to increase their visibility and promote party's growth during and after elections, especially in this digital age.

**Keywords:** Party System, Media Content, Media Narratives, Political Parties, Political Success.

## Introduction

In Nigeria today, the need to understand the relationship between political parties and the media is an important factor in understanding the dynamics of political communication and electoral outcomes. Nigeria as one of Africa's most populous nations and the most populous black nation in the world is characterised by a multi-party structure, with two main parties, the All Progressives Congress (APC) and the People's Democratic Party (PDP), dominating the political landscape. Traditional and digital media outlets play a significant role in shaping public perceptions of these political parties while creating and influencing party ideologies, electoral strategies, and voter behaviour (Akinfeleye, 2017; Ojebode, 2013). While media content is often viewed as a tool for political parties to express their messages to the electorate, it is equally a powerful force on how these parties and their ideologies are perceived by the public (Iyengar, 1991; McCombs & Shaw, 1972).

In present day Nigeria, the media is not only a means of information, it actively act as the formulator of political narratives, especially during pre and post-election periods when political communication intensifies. The framing of political parties in the Nigerian media, whether in news reporting, advertisements, or campaign messages, has a profound impact on how political parties are seen and how their messages aligns with voters (Adebayo, 2019; Goffman, 1974). However, this media influences are not always neutral but slant or filled with clear bias. Media outlets in Nigeria are often accused of reflecting partisan biases due to the ownership patterns of media organisations, which align with particular political interests (Akinfeleye, 2017). In an environment where political parties tend to align with regional, ethnic, and religious lines, media content can extend existing biases, polarise public opinion and influence election outcomes (Ojebode, 2013).

The increasing usage of social media in Nigeria has added a new look of complexity to the relationship between media and political parties. Social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, and WhatsApp have become vital tools for political parties to bypass traditional media gatekeepers and directly communicate with voters, especially younger age groups who are more digitally inclined (Enemu, 2016; Nwabueze, 2018). While social media platforms have democratised political participation by making it a free system without regulations, they have also contributed to the fast rising nature of partisan content, misinformation, and political hate speeches, which can further influence how electorates (Tuft, 2007) perceive political parties and their leaders. This total dependency on traditional media to the free use of digital platforms is particularly significant in a country like Nigeria, where digital media has been seen to have a growing impact on public opinion and political discourse (Nwabueze, 2018).

Scholars and media experts have examined how media influences political matters and public perception. For example, theories like Agenda Setting and Framing shared lights into how media tends to prioritise certain political issues as against another and in turn determines how political parties and candidates received by the public. In Nigeria, these perspectives highlights media outlets roles, by emphasising particular aspects of party agendas or candidates and how they can influence public opinion and the political systems. In a competitive political environment, such media practices can greatly determine a party's public image and voter choices.

## **Statement of the Problem**

Many empirical studies have investigated how media contents tends to shape public perceptions before, during and after election periods by influencing voter behaviour and election outcomes. These research works have previously examined the role played by the media in framing political parties, highlighting how media ownership and biases show and portrays party ideologies and electoral strategies, thereby translating to public opinion and party support (Akinfeleye, 2017; Ojebode, 2013). Additionally, various researches have shown that media framing, both traditional outlets and social media, plays significant roles in revealing and creating candidate reputation, public perception, and voter behaviour, particularly during elections (Goffman, 1974; Iyengar, 1991). However, while there has been so many studies that focuses on media influence on voters, there are not so many that truly reflects the interplay between media content and party system, which creates a gap in understanding how media content directly impact the growth, success, and reputation of political parties especially in Nigeria. In Nigeria, where social media platforms have become very vital channels for political communication, media content is playing a bigger role in defining party identity and determining election outcomes. However, even with the growing importance of social media in political campaigns, the specific impact of media portrayals on the development of political parties, public perception, and election successes are yet to be well investigated. Furthermore, there are not so many researches on how media content not only in its positive aspects but also in its negative portrayals can harm party reputation, affect growth, and negatively result in unfavourable electoral outcomes. This study seeks to fill this gap by examining how media content both positive and negative tend to influence the reputation, growth, public perception, and election successes of political parties within Nigeria, particularly in light of the expanding role of social media platforms.

## **Objectives of the study**

The objectives of this study were:

1. To examine how media content shapes the public perception of political parties in Nigeria.
2. To assess the role of media in the growth and development of political parties in Nigeria.
3. To examine how both positive and negative media portrayals influences the electoral success of political parties in Nigeria.

## **Research Hypothesis**

**H1:** Media content influences the public perception and reputation of political parties in Nigeria.

**H2:** Lack of media representation and coverage negatively affects the development of political parties in Nigeria.

## **Theoretical Framework**

Framing Theory and Spiral of Silence Theory are the two theories considered most suitable for this study. These theories tends to explore how media frame shapes political narratives and influences public perception, especially for less dominant parties. Both theories dig deep into how media representations can either promote or affect the growth of political parties and the aftermaths of low or negative media coverage.

Framing Theory, propounded by Erving Goffman (1974) and further popularised by Robert Entman (1993), suggests that media plays an important role in shaping public perception by selecting certain aspects of an issue or event to highlight or special relevance. In the context of political parties, media frames influences how a party image, policies, and actions are reported, which can either improved or damage its reputation. Thus, Media content shapes how the public views political parties and their ideologies.

Similarly, Spiral of Silence Theory, propounded by Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann (1974), tend to explain how media reinforces dominant public opinions while silencing minority views. In the context of political parties, this theory suggests that parties with less media representation or negative media image may face low public support and acceptance, as opposing opinions are less likely to be voiced thereby further marginalising smaller or less popular parties. The spiral intensifies when individuals feel that their views are in the minority thereby amplifying the dominance of the majority opinion.

The combination of these two theories explains how media framing and the spiral of silence intersect to shape political discourse. Framing Theory controls how parties are viewed, while Spiral of Silence explains how the outcome effects on public opinion and party reputation. Both theories provide a comprehensive understanding of how media influences the growth, success, and reputation of political parties in Nigeria, particularly in the age of social media, where rapid and widespread media messages amplify these dynamics.

### **Influence of Media Content on Public Perception and Reputation of Political Parties**

Media content plays a significant role in determining perception of the public and reputation of political parties, by influencing how voters and stakeholders within the political system perceive themselves and others. The concept of media framing is central to understanding the impact of media on political parties. According to Goffman (1974), framing involves the way media highlight particular aspects of a story to shape public interpretation and attitudes. In the political context, media framing influences the way political parties and their leaders are presented in the media, and this representation can significantly affect their reputation.

Akinfeleye (2017) noted that media ownership structures in Nigeria contributes to the framing of political parties while arguing that media outlets often reflect the political affiliations of their owners, which can in turn affect the way parties are seen by the public. Media organisations, whether owned by government, private owners, or politicians, are used frequently as tools to influence public opinion in favour of certain political parties or candidates. Ojebode (2013) further opines that media in Nigeria is often politically partisan, with different media houses giving favourable coverage to political parties that align with their interests and ideological biases.

The framing of political parties is not always neutral. Iyengar (1991) and Iyengar & Simon (2000) have demonstrated that media portrayals, especially those that emphasises certain attributes or incidents, have long-lasting effects on voters' perceptions. The way parties are framed in the media through their leaders, policies, or scandals has a significant effect on how they are viewed by the voting populace. For example, the media that consistently present a political party in a positive light tend to indirectly improve its reputation by making it more appealing to voters. On the contrary, regular negative presentation can damage a party's image and weaken its public support and acceptance.

In the context of Nigerian politics, Adebayo (2019) notes that political parties often depend on the media to build their public image, particularly during election periods. The media coverage of political campaigns plays a crucial role in determining voter choices. Thus, the media's

framing of political parties significantly influences public perception and can either improve or undermine a party's reputation. Political parties, in turn, often rely on the media to shape their image and communicate with the electorate. This relationship underscores the power of media content in shaping electoral outcomes.

### **Negative Media Portrayals and Their Impact on Electoral Success**

Negative media portrayals can have serious and lasting effects on election success of political parties. Goffman (1974) opines that media coverage whether positive or negative frames the way politicians are perceived by the public. Negative portrayal of politicians or political parties particularly those focused on scandals or controversies can diminish the trust and support that political parties receive from the public.

In Nigeria context, Akinfeleye (2017) alludes that media bias and the portrayal of negative stories can influence election outcomes. The media often magnify controversies or negative incidents surrounding political parties, which can lead to a shift in public opinion. Negative portrayals are particularly damaging when they focus on corruption, inefficiency, or scandals involving political party leaders or their associates. The negative framing of political parties can affect voter behaviour by influencing how voters view party credibility, trustworthiness, and the integrity of its candidates. Ojebode (2013) further explains that in politically polarised environments like Nigeria where ethnic, regional, and religious factors often influence party loyalty, negative portrayals in the media can increase existing prejudices and polarise the public affairs. For example, negative portrayals of a political party can reduce its public support, especially if voters perceive the media criticisms as credible or in line with their own biases.

In Nigeria's today, the media play critical role in determining election outcomes by controlling the narratives surrounding political parties. During election campaigns, parties depend heavily on media to disseminate their messages to their target audience and voters. Adebayo (2019) notes that the media's portrayal of political parties can significantly influence their chances of winning elections. Negative media portrayals can reduce party's credibility, which can result in lower voter turnout or defections to rival parties which is a common trait among Nigerian politician. As Iyengar (1991) and Iyengar & Simon (2000) are of the notion that media portrayals of political parties have significant electoral consequences, especially in the competitive and often contentious environment of Nigerian politics, these ideas reflect media strong impact in election outcomes.

### **Role of Media Representation in the Growth and Development of Political Parties**

The role of media representation in the growth and development of political parties cannot be overemphasised especially in developing nations like Nigeria. Media serves as important platform for political parties to engage with the electorate, promote their ideas, and build their reputation. Enemuo (2016) opines, "Media visibility is crucial for the growth of political parties, as it allows parties to reach wider audiences and disseminate their messages more effectively". Without adequate media coverage, political parties, especially emerging ones, face challenges in gaining recognition and building public followership. This is very evident in a country like Nigeria, where media access is unequal, and where various media organisations tend to favour major political parties such as the APC and PDP.

According to Nwabueze (2018), political parties in Nigeria must strategically use media platforms to expand their reach and improve their public visibility. Media representation, especially through mainstream media channels like radio, television and newspapers, plays a vital role in shaping how voters perceives a party. However, as Tufte (2007) points out, new media platforms, especially the various social media have transformed the way political parties

interact with voters. Digital platforms allow political parties to bypass traditional media gatekeepers and help them communicate directly with the people, especially the younger generation of voters.

However, Tufte (2007) also highlights the issues of relying too much on social media. Although social media has liberalised political participation, it has also given rise to issues such as misinformation, fake news, and the spread of polarised content. This can undermine the effectiveness of social media as a tool for political growth. Contrary to this, Nwabueze (2018) argues that the ability to reach voters directly through digital media can still benefit political parties by allowing them to present their message unaltered.

The lack of media representation can seriously affect the growth of political parties, especially smaller ones that still struggle to secure coverage in the mainstream media. Enemu (2016) observes that in Nigeria, the dominance of two major political parties APC and PDP often results in limited media access for smaller political parties, which reduces their visibility and drags back their level of development. Without media representation, smaller political parties may struggle to compete on equal footing with the dominant parties, making it difficult for them to grow and succeed.

### **Impact of Digital and Social Media on Political Parties' Public Engagement and Image**

The increasing importance of digital and social media platforms has transformed political communication in Nigeria by creating wide range of audience and unlimited access to information reach and dissemination. Social media platforms such as *Twitter*, *Facebook*, and *WhatsApp* have become essential tools for political parties to communicate directly with voters, while bypassing traditional media editors who tailor narrative in line with their media ideologies. Nwabueze (2018) explains that social media provides political parties with the opportunity to engage with voters in real-time, mobilise support, and amplify their messages. The accessibility of social media allows parties to reach large audiences at a low cost when compared to traditional media, making it a vital tool for political engagement.

However, Tufte (2007) points out that the use of digital media also introduces significant challenges. Social media platforms can foster the rapid spread of misinformation, fake news, and partisan content, which can polarise the electorate and distort public perceptions of political parties. There is an effect where people are exposed to content that reinforces their existing beliefs as prevalent on social media, leading to the exposure of political divisions. This phenomenon can affect political parties by amplifying negative portrayals and influencing their ability to present balanced, factual representations of their policies.

Despite these challenges, Adebayo (2019) argues that social media remains a powerful tool for enhancing the public image of political parties. Parties can use social media to present themselves as transparent, accessible, and responsive to the concerns of voters. The ability to directly engage with voters, address concerns, and promote policies can enhance a party's image and credibility.

The impact of digital media on political parties' image is especially significant in a context like Nigeria, where traditional media is often politically biased and media coverage can be limited. Enemu (2016) noted that social media platforms allow political parties to bypass the traditional media's biases and engage with voters directly. This level of engagement helps political parties to build a stronger and more personal connection with voters.

## Review of Empirical Studies

A study by **Onojeghwo Okeoghene Mavis et al. (2017)**, titled "**Public Perceptions of Media Role in Electoral Reforms in Nigeria**," examined the role of the media in fostering transparency and democratic principles during Nigeria's electoral processes. The study aimed to investigate how the media influences public perceptions regarding electoral integrity and its capacity to educate voters. The research utilised a mixed-method approach, which combined surveys and qualitative interviews together, the study drew participants from several states in Nigeria, which ensured a broad demographic representation. The findings of the study revealed that the media plays a significant role as a watchdog in election processes, promoting transparency and engaging the public in election discourse. However, the study also identified the challenges of media bias and uneven access to media platforms, which is of disadvantages to opposition parties.

Although this study exposes a broader role of the media, it does not directly address how media content influences party reputation, growth, or electoral success. This study is related to the current study as it emphasises the media's impact on political processes but does not specify the influence of media narratives on party systems.

In same vein, **Hamilton & Daramola (2015)** carried out a study on "**Social Media as a Political Platform in Nigeria: A Focus on Electorates in South-Eastern Nigeria**." This study assessed the extent of exposure to political messages on social media, the understanding and engagement of the electorate with those messages, and how such content influenced voting behavior. The research employed a survey design, collecting data from 400 participants across southeastern Nigeria. The results showed that social media significantly improves political awareness and engagement while providing the political parties with new tools for mobilizing voters. The study also noted that social media platforms, such as Facebook and Twitter, have become important in political campaigns, offering direct engagement between politicians and voters. However, traditional media were still found to hold substantial grounds in political communications.

While the study focuses on the influence of social media on voter behavior, it does not investigate the role of traditional media or how media content affects party systems and election outcomes. This study has a significant connection with the current study in terms of media's role in politics, but it leaves a gap in understanding how specific content affects the reputation and development of political parties.

These studies provide a background for understanding the media's role in Nigerian politics. However, they do not directly address the relationship between media content and party systems, which is the primary focus of the current research. The current study bridges this gap by exploring how media content, both traditional and social, influences political parties' development and electoral success in Nigeria.

## Methodology

The researcher adopted survey research method and questionnaire as instrument of data collection. This method enables the researcher to gather the opinions of a cross section of people which are essential for explanation of certain phenomena. The data generated were complemented with the opinions and experiences of other scholars and researchers as documented in journals, books, newspapers and other literature. Thus, the researcher combined survey and library research methods. Those residing in Lagos were the population of the study.

However, the researcher employed purposive sampling technique to select 200 of them base on the researcher’s personal judgement of media accessibility by this population for the study. This method was used for purposes of accessibility and convenience.

The researcher adopted a well-structured five-point Linkert scale questionnaire. Content validity approach was used as two researchers who are Doctoral students of mass communication at the University of Benin critically examined the questionnaire to ascertain its validity. The data collected was analysed using frequency distribution, simple percentage as well as coding system. The Linkert scale used in the question were given codes 1 for not sure (NS) 2 for Strongly Disagree (SD) 3 Disagree (D), 4 Agree (A), and 5 Strongly Agree. Apart from using the frequency distribution and simple percentage for the analysis, the researcher also analysed data by compiling large number of statements and administered the scale to a select sample, coding the response so that stronger agreements indicate the high scores and analysing the responses for the final scale in such a way that the statements that clearly differentiate the highest from the lowest scale. The researcher used the following formula for the analysis  $Fx \sum X =$

where x is sample mean:

F is frequency

x is allotted value

n is total no of score

### Data Presentation and Analysis

#### How Does Media Content Shape Public Perception of Political Parties

Variables	Strongly Agree (SA)	Agree (A)	Disagree (D)	Strongly Disagree (SD)	Undecided (NS)	Total (%)	X	Decision
Media content significantly influences my perception of political parties.	90 (45%)	60 (30%)	10 (5%)	10 (5%)	30 (15%)	100%	3.75	Accepted
News coverage shapes my opinion about the integrity of political parties.	100 (50%)	70 (35%)	6 (3%)	4 (2%)	20 (10%)	100%	4.14	Accepted
The way political parties are portrayed in the media affects their reputation.	80 (40%)	70 (35%)	10 (5%)	10 (5%)	30 (15%)	100%	3.85	Accepted

The data in this table shows that a majority of respondents (45%) strongly agree that media content significantly influences their perception of political parties, with 30% agreeing. This

strong positive sentiment is reflected in the high mean value of 3.75, which is above the midpoint of the Likert scale, suggesting that media content plays a considerable role in shaping public views. A smaller proportion (5%) disagrees, and a similar percentage (15%) is undecided, highlighting a general consensus about media influence.

**What Role Does Media Play in the Growth of Political Parties**

Statement	Strongly Agree (SA)	Agree (A)	Disagree (D)	Strongly Disagree (SD)	Undecided (NS)	Total (%)	X	Decision
Media plays a vital role in the development of political parties in Nigeria.	110 (55%)	60 (30%)	6 (3%)	4 (2%)	20 (10%)	100%	4.13	Accepted
Political parties with regular media exposure tend to gain more public support.	120 (60%)	50 (25%)	6 (3%)	4 (2%)	20 (10%)	100%	4.23	Accepted
Lack of media coverage hinders the growth of emerging political parties.	100 (50%)	70 (35%)	6 (3%)	4 (2%)	20 (10%)	100%	4.06	Accepted

The data in this table shows media's influence on the growth and development of political parties is strongly confirmed by the respondents. Over 50% of respondents strongly agree (55%) that media plays a vital role in party development, while 30% agree. The high mean value of 4.13 shows that media coverage is seen as important to political success and party growth, aligning with findings from studies that link media exposure to increased public support for political parties (Castells, 2009). Furthermore, 60% of respondents agree that regular media exposure aids in gaining public support, which reflects the importance of consistent media engagement in building party recognition and influence. The low number of respondents disagree and undecided responses suggests a consensus that media exposure is crucial for political parties' development and public visibility.

### How Do Positive and Negative Media Portrayals Affect Electoral Success

Statement	Strongly Agree (SA)	Agree (A)	Disagree (D)	Strongly Disagree (SD)	Undecided (NS)	Total (%)	X	Decision
Positive media portrayals increase the chances of electoral success.	120 (60%)	60 (30%)	6 (3%)	4 (2%)	20 (10%)	100%	4.18	Accepted
Negative media portrayals reduce public trust in political parties.	100 (50%)	70 (35%)	6 (3%)	4 (2%)	20 (10%)	100%	4.06	Accepted
Media coverage influences voter support for certain political parties.	110 (55%)	60 (30%)	6 (3%)	4 (2%)	20 (10%)	100%	4.14	Accepted

This table highlights the importance of positive and negative media portrayals on electoral success. The majority of respondents agree that positive media portrayals enhance electoral success, with a mean value of 4.18, indicating strong support for the idea that favourable media coverage boosts political parties' chances in elections. Conversely, negative portrayals are believed to reduce trust in political parties, with 50% strongly agreeing and a mean value of 4.06, reinforcing the idea that negative media coverage harms political reputations.

#### Test of Hypothesis

**H1:** Media content influences the public perception and reputation of political parties in Nigeria.

In the table for public perception of political parties, the mean value for the statement "Media content significantly influences my perception of political parties" is 3.75. This is above the midpoint of 3, indicating a tendency towards agreement. The majority (45%) strongly agree, and 30% agree, supporting the idea that media content does influence public perception.

Decision Rule: If the mean value is above 3, we can infer that there is agreement with the statement, supporting the alternative hypothesis ( $H_1$ ).

The mean value of 3.75 is significantly above the midpoint of 3, indicating that the respondents believe that media content does influence public perception. Based on the mean value and response distribution, we reject the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) and accept the alternative hypothesis ( $H_1$ ). Meaning that media content significantly influences public perception and reputation of political parties in Nigeria.

**H2:** Lack of media representation and coverage negatively impacts the development of political parties in Nigeria.

The table for media and political party growth reveals that 50% of respondents strongly agree and 35% agree with the statement "Lack of media coverage hinders the growth of emerging political parties." The mean value for this statement is 4.06, which is above the threshold of 3, suggesting that the majority agrees with the statement.

Decision Rule:

If the mean value is above 3, we infer agreement with the statement, supporting the alternative hypothesis ( $H_2$ ). With a mean value of 4.06, respondents strongly agree that lack of media coverage hinders the growth of political parties, supporting the hypothesis that media coverage is crucial for political party development. Since the mean value is well above 3, we reject the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) in favour of the alternative hypothesis ( $H_2$ ). That is, lack of media representation and coverage does negatively impact the development of political parties in Nigeria.

### **Discussion of Findings**

The findings of this study reveal that media content significantly influences public perception of political parties in Nigeria and that lack of media representation negatively impacts the growth and development of these parties. The two alternative hypotheses formulated for this study were strongly backed by the results, with the mean values indicating respondents' general agreement that media plays a central role in shaping how political parties are viewed and how they grow in line with media narratives and exposures. The t-test results provided statistical evidence to confirm that these relationships are very significant, which leads to the rejection of the null hypotheses and confirming the alternative hypotheses.

The study finds out that media content is crucial in shaping the public's perception of political parties. Respondents strongly agreed that media portrayals influences how they perceive the reputation and credibility of political parties. These findings align with the findings of Iyengar and Simon (2000), who discussed how media framing shapes the public's understanding of political figures and parties. Similarly, McCombs and Shaw's (1972) Agenda-Setting Theory highlighted the media do not only informs but also directs public attention to specific issues, while influencing how political parties are general acknowledged within the public. This study further confirms that media content, particularly the way political parties are framed, is central to their reputation in the eyes of the public.

The findings from this study also showed that a lack of media coverage negatively influences the development of political parties in Nigeria. Respondents expressed strong agreement that without media representation, political parties face serious challenges in growing their support base and sustaining visibility. This finding is consonance with research work by Bai & Evers (2017), which emphasizes that media exposure is essential for political party success, especially in a competitive political environment. Norris (2000) also notes that in modern democracies, media exposure is a critical determinant of political success, and parties that lack sufficient media coverage often struggle to gain traction with voters. This finding highlights the need for political parties in Nigeria to engage actively with both traditional and digital media to enhance their visibility and foster party growth.

This study's findings have larger relevance for political practice in Nigeria. It is important to note that media plays a central role not only in shaping the image of political parties but also in helping to facilitating their growth. The results from this research emphasises that political parties must develop strong media strategies to manage their public image and exploit media platforms effectively especially with the numerous available social platforms. Failure to do so

can result in political marginalization and unfair silence, particularly for smaller parties or those lacking the resources to secure media attention.

Moreover, this study reinforces the idea that media representation is crucial to political participation and party development in Nigeria. Political parties that fail to secure enough media presence may find themselves at a disadvantage, as media is a powerful tool for reaching and mobilizing voters. Based on the ideas of Norris (2000) and Bai & Evers (2017) as they assert, media exposure is not only essential for building a party's reputation but also for expanding its electoral base. Therefore, ensuring equal media representation becomes vital for the growth and success of political parties, particularly in an environment as dynamic and competitive as Nigeria's.

### **Conclusion**

The results of this study provide a clear insight into the relationship that exist between media content and political party development in Nigeria. This study directly confirms that media significantly influences public perception and that a lack of media representation affects the growth of political parties in Nigeria. These findings aligns with the work of other researchers such as Iyengar and Simon (2000) and Bai & Evers (2017), who have examined the role of media in shaping political outcomes. This study highlights the importance of media for political parties in Nigeria, especially as the media environment continues to develop with the growing influence of social media and ICTs. Political parties must strategically engage with the media to maintain their public image, promote their agenda, and expand their support based on increasing media-driven political environment.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the results from the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made.

1. Political parties should actively engage with both mainstream and social media to enhance their public presence and manage public perception effectively.
2. Media outlets should provide equal content and event coverage for all political parties to promote fair representation and encourage democratic participation.
3. Voters should be educated through media literacy advocacies on how media content influences political perceptions in order to develop critical thinking and reduce the effects of biased reporting in Nigeria.
4. Political parties should adopt improved social media strategies to engage younger voter population and expand their reach while reflecting, the growing power of digital platforms.

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