



Comparative rhetorical analysis of Peter Obi and Bola Ahmed Tinubu's social media campaigns in the 2023 Nigerian presidential election

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ABSTRACT

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The researchers carried out a comparative rhetorical analysis of Peter Obi (PO) and Bola Ahmed Tinubu's (BAT) social media campaigns during the 2023 Nigerian presidential election. Utilizing a qualitative textual analysis framework, the research focused on all campaign messages by Peter Obi and Bola Ahmed Tinubu (BAT) posted on Facebook and X (formerly Twitter) from September 28, 2022, to February 23, 2023, identifying a total of 223 messages, with 12 purposively selected for in-depth analysis. These texts were chosen for their representativeness of shared ideologies and their engagement potential, providing valuable insights into the candidates' communicative approaches. The study highlights the contrasting political ideologies embodied by Obi and Tinubu, as they emerged as frontrunners from the Labour Party and All Progressives Congress, respectively. Employing multiple coding techniques, the analysis categorized rhetorical elements, focusing on pathos, ethos, logos, call to action and themes of transparency and accountability, while also conducting sentiment analysis to classify the expressed sentiments. Findings reveal that Tinubu effectively leveraged a combination of logos, pathos, and ethos to establish credibility and connect with voters through logical policy proposals and emotional appeals, whereas Obi's campaign emphasized accountability, unity, and logical critique, resonating deeply with his audience through emotive language and local expressions. The researchers recommended that for political candidates prioritize emotional connections in their messaging. This study contributes to the existing body of knowledge by providing novel insights into the rhetorical strategies employed by political candidates in Nigeria, highlighting the significance of emotional connections and data-driven approaches in shaping electoral outcomes.

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1. Introduction

Rhetoric is the art of persuasion, incorporating the strategies and techniques used to influence an audience's beliefs, attitudes, or actions through language. It involves the effective use of words, symbols, and arguments to convey messages compellingly and convincingly. In political contexts,



rhetoric plays a crucial role in shaping public perception and mobilizing support, as candidates craft their messages to resonate with voters' values and emotions. The study of rhetoric in political discourse often examines how language can be manipulated to achieve specific outcomes, highlighting the importance of context, audience, and delivery in communication strategies (Nwaoboli et al., 2024).

In elections, rhetoric becomes a powerful tool for candidates to articulate their visions, policies, and identities. Political rhetoric often employs various devices, such as metaphors, anecdotes, and emotional appeals, to connect with voters on a personal level (Asemah, Nkwam-Uwaoma, et al., 2017). The effectiveness of these rhetorical strategies can significantly impact electoral outcomes, as they help candidates differentiate themselves from their opponents and establish a rapport with the electorate (Goldsmith & Griscom, 2018). For instance, Oso (2024) discusses how impoliteness strategies in political tweets can reflect underlying tensions and influence voter perceptions, demonstrating the nuanced role of rhetoric in shaping electoral discourse. Thus, understanding the rhetorical landscape of an election is essential for analyzing how candidates communicate their messages and engage with the public (Brennan, 2014; Ocasio, 2018).

The 2023 Nigerian presidential election was marked by intense competition among various candidates, including Bola Ahmed Tinubu and Peter Obi, each representing different political ideologies and constituencies (Amiebaho et al., 2023). This election was particularly significant as it occurred against the backdrop of pressing national issues, such as economic instability, security challenges, and demands for good governance. The candidates utilized social media platforms extensively to reach a broader audience, employing tailored rhetorical strategies to engage voters and mobilize support. Patrick & Ndimele (2024) highlight the role of linguistic creativity in campaign discourse, noting how candidates leveraged social media to craft messages that resonated with the electorate's aspirations and frustrations. Furthermore, Sandehl (2024) emphasizes the dual role of political elites in shaping electoral rhetoric, either as agents of peace or tension, which underscores the complex dynamics at play during the election. The researchers focused on conducting a comparative rhetorical analysis of Peter Obi and Bola Ahmed Tinubu's social media campaigns in the 2023 Nigerian presidential election, examining the effectiveness of their rhetorical strategies in shaping electoral outcomes and influencing public opinion. This study is significant because it provides valuable insights into the rhetorical strategies employed by Peter Obi and Bola Ahmed Tinubu during the 2023 Nigerian presidential election, shedding light on how their social media campaigns influenced public opinion and shaped electoral outcomes. Ultimately, this research contributes to an immersed understanding of the role of rhetoric in political discourse, informing strategies for effective communication in future elections.

Rhetorics is the deliberate and strategic art of effective or persuasive communication, whether spoken or written. It utilizes various linguistic, symbolic, and stylistic elements to inform, persuade, or motivate audiences, considering factors such as context, purpose, audience, tone, and emotional appeal, with the ultimate goal of influencing beliefs, attitudes, or actions.

Kennedy (2003) sees rhetoric as the art of persuasion. This definition emphasizes rhetoric's capacity to persuade and affect others, highlighting its persuasive qualities. Various situations, including speeches, writings, and advertising, use rhetoric to influence people's opinions or behavior (D. M. Kennedy, 2003; G. A. Kennedy, 2003a). It entails the deliberate use of language and rhetorical strategies to successfully convey concepts and elicit the intended reaction from the audience (Komiti & Asemah, 2021; Onoja & Oguche, 2020).

According to Foss (2017) rhetoric is the art or practice of skillfully utilizing words to connect with and convince an audience. Foss's definition highlights that rhetoric is the artful use of words to successfully communicate ideas and influence attitudes, going beyond simple grammatical accuracy. Whether using logical arguments, emotional appeals, or ethical reasons, rhetoric entails knowing the audience and adjusting persuasive tactics to engage and influence them. More so, Miller (2011) defines rhetoric as the study of how words may affect behavior and cognition. This definition emphasizes rhetoric's analytical component and its function in analyzing how language influences people's thoughts and behavior (Atwill et al., 2011). Rhetoric examines how language may influence attitudes, behaviors, and perceptions. It also sheds light on the methods and approaches used to persuade people (Pöttsch, 2012).

The 2023 Nigerian presidential election was a pivotal moment in the country's history, marking 24 years of uninterrupted democracy, the longest span in Nigeria's history. The election took place on February 25, 2023, for presidential and National Assembly elections, with elections for 28 of the 36 governorships and State Houses of Assembly following on March 11. This election was characterized by intense campaign rhetoric, as candidates employed a variety of strategies to sway voters and articulate their visions for the country. According to Ashindorbe & Albert (2023) the rhetoric utilized during the campaign reflected the candidates' attempts to connect with the electorate on pressing national issues, showcasing the dynamic interplay between political communication and voter engagement (Fox, 2023).

Bola Ahmed Tinubu, representing the All Progressives Congress (APC), emerged victorious in the election, securing 36.61% of the total votes, which translated to just under 8.8 million votes. His campaign heavily focused on his extensive experience and established track record as the former Governor of Lagos State. As noted by Ikechukwu-Ibe & Aboh (2024), Tinubu positioned himself as

a candidate capable of delivering results based on his past governance, which resonated with voters who prioritized experience and proven leadership in their decision-making process.

The election also witnessed the remarkable rise of Peter Obi, the candidate from the Labour Party, who garnered substantial support, particularly among younger voters. Ikefuama (2023) observed that Obi's campaign adeptly leveraged social media platforms to mobilize youth support and challenge traditional power structures in Nigerian politics. His ability to connect with the younger demographic through innovative digital strategies highlighted a shift in political engagement, signaling a potential change in the country's political dynamics.

What made this election unique was the deployment of advanced technology to improve the integrity and transparency of the electoral process. The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) utilized the Bi-modal Voting Accreditation System (BVAS) to verify and authenticate voters, and the INEC Results Viewing Portal to provide real-time access to election results (Nwaoboli & Uchenunu, 2024). This was also the first nationwide election conducted within the framework of the new Electoral Act, signed into law by President Buhari in February 2022. The election saw a high number of registered voters, with over 93 million people registered, and 18 presidential candidates vying for the top spot. The election saw a total of 8,794,726 votes cast for Bola Tinubu, while his main rivals, Atiku Abubakar and Peter Obi, received 6,984,520 and 6,101,533 votes, respectively (Nwaoboli et al., 2024).

However, the election was not without its controversies. Molale et al., (2024) reported allegations of vote buying, voter intimidation, and various electoral malpractices that marred the integrity of the electoral process. Such irregularities led to widespread dissatisfaction among opposition candidates, including Atiku Abubakar and Peter Obi, who rejected the election results, citing inconsistencies and a lack of transparency in the voting process. This turbulence stresses on the challenges facing Nigeria's democratic processes and the need for reforms to enhance electoral integrity.

The practical gap in Nigeria's electoral process is alarming, as the absence of effective social media regulation and fact-checking mechanisms can lead to the dissemination of misinformation, hate speech, and electoral violence. This can have severe consequences, including misinformation influencing voters' decisions, inciteful rhetoric fueling tensions and sparking violence among supporters, and the spread of misinformation eroding trust in electoral institutions. As a result, there is an urgent need to address this gap and ensure responsible social media usage in political campaigns.

Despite the growing body of research on social media's impact on politics, there is a significant literature gap regarding the rhetorical strategies employed by presidential candidates on social

media in Nigeria. While studies such as Ugoala (2024) and Nwaoboli et al., (2024) have examined social media's role in Nigerian politics, they primarily focus on public opinion, fact-checking, and economic agendas. Notably, Ugoala (2024) evaluated Facebook posts on presidential candidates, highlighting the need for critical analysis of social media campaigns. Similarly, Nwaoboli & Uchenunu (2024) explored the perception of rhetorical strategies on social media during the 2023 Nigerian Presidential Election Campaigns. However, a comprehensive comparative analysis of Peter Obi and Bola Ahmed Tinubu's social media campaigns remains unexplored and as such hinders the understanding of effective rhetorical strategies in Nigerian presidential elections, limiting informed decision-making and policy development. This study therefore covers the gap by comparatively examining the rhetorics of Peter Obi and Bola Ahmed Tinubu's social media campaigns in the 2023 Nigerian presidential election. Based on the aforementioned, the objectives of this study are to: (1) Identify the rhetorics in Peter Obi and Bola Ahmed Tinubu's 2023 electoral campaigns, (2) Analyze the linguistic elements in Peter Obi and Bola Ahmed Tinubu's 2023 Campaign rhetorics, (3) Evaluate Themes conveyed in Peter Obi and Bola Ahmed Tinubu's 2023 Campaign rhetorics.

2. Theoretical Framework

Election Rhetorics and its Impacts on Voter Engagement

Election rhetoric plays a crucial role in shaping voter engagement, as it encompasses the strategies candidates use to communicate their messages and connect with the electorate. This form of rhetoric often includes emotionally charged language, persuasive appeals, and vivid imagery designed to resonate with voters' values and aspirations. Stuckey (2017) emphasizes that effective election rhetoric can evoke feelings of hope, anger, and urgency, which are essential for mobilizing support and encouraging voter participation. By harnessing these emotional responses, candidates can create a compelling narrative that not only captures attention but also fosters a sense of collective identity among voters, thereby enhancing their engagement in the electoral process.

Abdulazeez et al., (2022) the visual elements of election rhetoric, such as posters and advertisements, significantly contribute to voter engagement by providing immediate and impactful messages. Qadir (2023) notes that visual rhetoric in election posters employs multimodal strategies to communicate candidates' platforms and identities. These visual elements can simplify complex political ideas, making them more accessible to the electorate. When combined with textual messages, visuals can reinforce key themes, making them memorable and compelling. This multimodal approach not only captures the attention of potential voters but also encourages them to actively participate in the electoral process, as they feel a stronger connection to the candidates' messages.

Rhetoric in political discourse also evolves to reflect the specific cultural and social contexts of each election. Mwiinga (2021) highlights how the rhetoric of political campaigns can be tailored to address the unique concerns of the electorate, as seen in the Zambian presidential election. By analyzing the discourse of an opposition candidate, the study reveals how rhetoric can address pressing national issues, thereby fostering a sense of relevance among voters. This localized approach to rhetoric enhances voter engagement by demonstrating that candidates are attuned to the needs and aspirations of their constituents, which can lead to increased voter turnout as people feel their voices are being acknowledged.

Furthermore, the contextual use of rhetoric can serve to differentiate candidates from their opponents, thus shaping voter perceptions and decisions. Arapovic & Brljavac (2012) discuss the significance of pre-election rhetoric in Bosnia and Herzegovina, where candidates employed specific linguistic strategies to frame their narratives and position themselves favorably in the eyes of voters. This strategic use of rhetoric not only influences public opinion but also fosters a competitive atmosphere that can energize the electorate (Olaoye et al., 2022). As candidates articulate their visions and critiques of opponents through carefully crafted messages, voters are encouraged to engage more deeply with the political discourse, prompting them to take informed decisions at the ballot box. Overall, election rhetoric is a powerful tool that significantly impacts voter engagement through emotional appeals, visual communication, localized discourse, and strategic differentiation.

Rhetorics and Voter Manipulation

Rhetoric, as a tool of persuasion, plays a significant role in shaping political discourse and influencing voter behavior. However, it can also be weaponized to manipulate public opinion and galvanize support for specific candidates or parties. This manipulation often occurs through the strategic use of language, imagery, and emotional appeals that resonate with voters' fears, hopes, and aspirations. Ikechukwu-Ibe & Aboh (2024) highlight how the rhetoric employed during Nigeria's 2023 elections reflected a conscious effort to engage younger voters, who are increasingly skeptical of traditional political narratives. This shift indicates a growing awareness among candidates of the need to adapt their rhetorical strategies to connect with a more discerning electorate.

Social media platforms, particularly Twitter, have become critical arenas for political engagement and manipulation. Ikefuama (2023) discusses how candidates utilized Twitter to craft messages that not only informed but also influenced voter perceptions and behaviors. The immediacy and reach of social media allow for rapid dissemination of rhetorical messages, which can be tailored to exploit current events or societal sentiments (Omoevah, 2022; Ugbotor et al., 2022). This environment creates opportunities for candidates to manipulate narratives, often

leading to polarized opinions among the electorate. The ability to quickly respond to opponents or to amplify certain messages can significantly sway public perception, making social media a powerful tool for voter manipulation.

Moreover, the concept of "weaponizing" rhetoric is particularly relevant in the context of contemporary political campaigns. Molale et al., (2024) argue that political rhetoric is often strategically crafted to galvanize support by appealing to emotions such as fear, anger, or hope. This approach can lead to the creation of in-group and out-group dynamics, where voters are encouraged to align with a candidate based on shared identities or grievances. Such tactics can effectively mobilize support but also risk deepening societal divisions, as they often rely on oversimplified narratives that do not account for the complexities of political issues.

The perception of rhetorical strategies also varies among different demographic groups, which can further complicate the landscape of voter manipulation. Nwaoboli et al., (2024) explore how different segments of the electorate perceive the rhetorical devices used by candidates during the 2023 Nigerian presidential elections. Their findings suggest that gender and socio-economic status can influence how voters interpret and respond to political rhetoric. This highlights the importance of understanding the audience when crafting rhetorical messages, as what resonates with one group may alienate another.

In addition to the overt manipulation of rhetoric, subtler forms of impoliteness and aggression in political discourse can also serve to manipulate voter sentiment. Oso (2024) examines the use of impoliteness strategies in political tweets, revealing how candidates may employ aggressive language to assert dominance or undermine opponents. This approach can create a combative political atmosphere that distracts from substantive policy discussions, ultimately shaping voter engagement in ways that prioritize emotional reactions over informed decision-making.

Empirical Review

Nwaoboli et al., (2024) carried out a study to ascertain the level of awareness of male and female voters in Benin City regarding the rhetorical devices used by the 2023 Nigerian presidential candidates; compare the differences in attitudes towards rhetorical devices between male and female voters in Benin City; investigate the impact of gender on voters' perceptions of rhetorical devices used by presidential candidates on social media; and assess the influence of rhetorical devices on voting decisions among male and female voters in Benin City during the 2023 Nigerian presidential election. Employing a qualitative research design, specifically Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), the study involved 100 participants drawn from a population of 804,615 registered voters in Benin City. Participants were organized into 10 focus groups, ensuring a balanced representation of males and females. Thematic analysis was conducted to explore gender differences and identify

patterns in attitudes towards rhetorical strategies such as metaphors and emotional appeals. Results: The findings revealed significant gender differences in attitudes towards rhetorical devices. Male voters preferred assertive and aggressive rhetorical styles, interpreting them as indicators of strength, while female voters favored empathetic and relatable communication styles. The study concludes that male and female voters in Benin City exhibit distinct preferences for the rhetorical devices used by presidential candidates on social media. Understanding these differences is essential for effective political messaging. It was recommended that political candidates should tailor their rhetorical strategies to address the preferences of both male and female voters by incorporating emotional appeals and relatable narratives for female voters while demonstrating strength and decisiveness to engage male voters.

Ekhareafu & Alonge (2021) conducted a comprehensive study utilizing textual analysis to explore the rhetorical tactics employed by politicians during the 2020 Edo gubernatorial election. Grounded in McCornack's theory of deceptive discourse, the research employed focused qualitative content analysis over a seven-week period leading up to the election, examining a total of 243 remarks sourced from television broadcasts, online platforms, and social media. The researchers categorized these remarks into three distinct groups based on their emotional appeal, emphasis on development, and use of aggressive language. The findings revealed that infrastructure development emerged as a prominent theme within the political rhetoric, with campaigns making extensive use of emotive techniques, including mudslinging, ethnic appeals, and references to developmental challenges. The study advocated for the involvement of campaign advisors to tailor messages more effectively to specific issues and underscored the necessity for careful vetting of political advertisements to mitigate animosity.

In a separate study, Osabutey & Okoro (2015) investigated the role of social media in political communication during the 2011 Nigerian presidential election. Employing a random sampling technique, the researchers gathered responses from 249 individuals who completed a questionnaire. The data analysis utilized descriptive statistics and hypothesis testing, revealing that a significant proportion of participants reported being influenced in their candidate selection by social media. This research suggested that voters increasingly prioritize candidate credibility and qualifications over ethnic and religious affiliations when making their electoral choices.

Raynauld & Lees-Marshment (2019) analyzed the charismatic leadership rhetoric utilized by Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump during the contentious 2016 presidential election. Utilizing Diction 7.0, a specialized content analysis software for political discourse, the study examined the campaign speeches of both candidates. The findings highlighted Trump's reliance on hyperbolic crisis rhetoric, the construction of a shared social identity, and appeals to collective memory and national nostalgia. Conversely, Clinton's rhetoric appeared constrained by gender expectations and

party affiliation. This study raised critical questions regarding the impact of charismatic rhetoric on candidate appeal and electability, suggesting that the nuances of rhetorical strategies play a significant role in shaping voter perceptions and electoral outcomes.

The studies by Nwaoboli & Uchenunu (2024), Ekhareafu & Alonge (2021), Osabutey & Okoro (2015), and Raynauld & Lees-Marshment (2019) differ significantly in focus and context compared to the current study. Ekhareafu and Alonge concentrated on the Edo gubernatorial election, while Okoro and Santos examined the 2011 presidential election, both of which provide insights into specific political contexts that differ from the contemporary landscape of the 2023 election. Aswad's analysis of Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump during the 2016 U.S. presidential election highlights a different cultural and political environment. In contrast, the current study employs a broader textual analysis grounded in rhetorical theory to compare the distinct rhetorical strategies of Obi and Tinubu, focusing on how these strategies resonate with their respective audiences. Despite these differences, there are notable similarities in methodology and thematic focus. All studies utilize textual analysis to explore how rhetoric influences voter engagement and decision-making. Additionally, both the current study and Aswad's research examine the role of rhetorical strategies in shaping political discourse and voter perceptions, emphasizing the importance of understanding how candidates craft their messages to mobilize support. Thus, while the studies differ in context and specific focus, they collectively contribute to a deeper understanding of the dynamics of political rhetoric and its impact on electoral outcomes.

Rhetoric Theory

Rhetoric, the art of persuasion, has its origins in ancient Greece, where philosophers like Aristotle, Plato, and Cicero established foundational principles that continue to influence contemporary communication. Aristotle's seminal work, "Rhetoric," defined the discipline as the ability to identify the means of persuasion in any given situation. He introduced key concepts such as ethos, pathos, and logos, which represent credibility, emotional appeal, and logical argument, respectively (Luzón, 2013). This framework laid the groundwork for understanding how effective communication can shape public perception and influence behavior across various domains, including politics, education, and philosophy (Yarosan & Asemah, 2008). The tenets of rhetoric theory focus on strategies used to persuade audiences and emphasize the importance of establishing credibility, engaging emotions, and presenting logical arguments (Barrett, 2013). Ethos is crucial for gaining the audience's trust, while pathos aims to evoke emotional responses that support the speaker's message. Logos relies on logical reasoning and evidence to construct compelling arguments (Qadir, 2023). Additionally, the concept of kairos highlights the significance of timing and context in communication, underscoring the need for speakers to be attuned to their audience's values and beliefs. These elements collectively provide a robust framework for analyzing

how language and communication can effectively influence public opinion and voter engagement (Stuckey, 2017).

However, rhetoric theory has not been without its criticisms. Detractors argue that rhetorical techniques can be manipulated to prioritize emotional appeal over factual accuracy, raising concerns about the integrity of political discourse (Ashindorbe & Albert, 2023). This potential for manipulation underscores the ethical implications of rhetoric, as it can sometimes obscure the truth or mislead audiences (Urbinati, 2019). Furthermore, some scholars contend that traditional rhetoric fails to account for the complexities of modern communication, particularly in digital environments where messages may be distorted or misinterpreted (Ashindorbe & Albert, 2023).

In the current study, rhetoric theory serves as a vital framework for examining how these candidates construct their messages to engage and persuade voters. Through analyzing their use of ethos, pathos, and logos, the study reveals how each candidate establishes credibility, evokes emotional responses, and presents logical arguments to influence public opinion. Additionally, considering the role of kairos allows for an exploration of how timely and contextually relevant messaging impacts voter engagement in a fast-changing political landscape.

3. Method

This study employed a qualitative textual analysis to conduct a comparative rhetorical analysis of Peter Obi and Bola Ahmed Tinubu's social media campaigns during the 2023 Nigerian presidential election. The population for this analysis included all campaign messages posted on Facebook and X (formerly Twitter) by both candidates from the commencement of the election campaign on September 28, 2022, until the conclusion of the official campaign period on February 23, 2023. A total of 223 rhetorical campaign messages were identified but 12 in total were analyzed manually, allowing for an in-depth exploration of the candidates' communicative rhetorics. Twelve texts were purposively chosen because they represented same ideologies in other rhetorics and were among the most engaging and influential campaign messages from Peter Obi and Bola Ahmed Tinubu, offering valuable insights into their rhetorical strategies. As such, purposive sampling enabled an in-depth examination of these critical texts, providing an understanding of the candidates' communication approaches with no need of analysing more texts since the analysed ones are generic

This study focused exclusively on Peter Obi and Bola Ahmed Tinubu, two of the top frontrunners in the 2023 Nigerian Presidential Election, due to their significant impact on the electoral landscape and representation of major political ideologies. As the candidates of the Labour Party and All Progressives Congress, respectively, they embodied contrasting visions for Nigeria's future, making their campaign rhetoric particularly relevant for analysis. Furthermore, their strong online

presence and active engagement on social media platforms made them ideal subjects for studying the intersection of politics and social media. More so, this study concentrated on their Facebook and X (formerly Twitter) accounts, as these platforms are among the most widely used social media channels in Nigeria, allowing candidates to reach a broad audience and shape public discourse.

To ensure the validity and reliability of the analysis, the researchers employed multiple coding techniques to categorize the rhetorical elements within the campaign messages. Each identified rhetoric was analyzed for its thematic content, focusing on key areas such as pathos, ethos, logos, transparency and accountability etc. Sentiment analysis was also conducted to classify the expressed sentiments as positive, negative, or neutral. This classification enabled an understanding of how each candidate framed their messages and engaged with the electorate. Additionally, the study examined specific linguistic features, including assertive language, emotive expressions, and language mixing, to assess how these elements contributed to the overall effectiveness of the candidates' rhetorical strategies.

4. Result and Discussion

Data Presentation

The section below presents representative samples and interpretations of rhetorics used on Facebook and X by Bola Ahmed Tinubu and Peter Obi.

Rhetorical Messages of Bola Ahmed Tinubu



Fig. 1. Logos (Logical Appeal)

Source: Facebook



Fig. 2. Pathos (Appeal to Emotions)

Source: X

Bola Ahmed Tinubu's social media messaging during the Nigerian presidential election campaign exhibits a strategic blend of rhetorical appeals to connect with his audience. In Fig. 1, Tinubu outlines specific policy proposals to "widen horizons and expand business reach" while improving key trade and manufacturing corridors, demonstrating a logical, evidence-based approach characteristic of the logos rhetorical appeal. Fig. 2, however, takes a different approach, as Tinubu emphasizes his personal relationships and connections with various professional groups, including professors, lawyers, and market women. This attempt to establish an emotional bond

with the audience aligns with the pathos rhetorical appeal, as he seeks to evoke a sense of trust and identification.



Fig. 3. Ethos
Source: X



Fig. 4. Ethos
Source: Facebook

Tinubu's focus on building credibility and trustworthiness is evident in Figures 3 and 4, which showcase his engagement with influential figures such as the Imo State Governor and private sector leaders. By highlighting these high-profile connections, Tinubu is strategically employing the ethos rhetorical appeal to establish his character and authority as a leader.

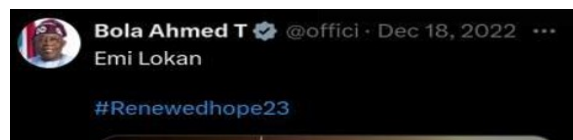


Fig. 5. Bandwagon
Source: X

Fig. 5 features the Yoruba phrase "Emi Lokan," which translates to "It is my turn," suggests a persuasive technique rooted in the bandwagon effect. Throughout his messaging, Tinubu utilizes a range of linguistic features to enhance the effectiveness of his rhetorical strategies. His use of assertive, confident language conveys a sense of decisiveness, while the incorporation of emotive Yoruba expressions, such as "Emi Lokan," aims to connect with the cultural identity and emotions of his target audience. This strategic use of language mixing further suggests an effort to engage with diverse linguistic groups and foster a sense of inclusivity.



Fig. 6. Accountability and Transparency
Source: X

Fig. 6 encourages the audience to join what is perceived as a growing and unstoppable movement, potentially swaying undecided voters. Tinubu's commitment to transparency and accountability is evident in the sixth image, where he outlines plans to "establish policies that would widen horizons and expand business reach." This focus on clear, actionable policy proposals

contributes to a sense of transparency and a willingness to be held accountable for his campaign promises.

Rhetorical Messages by Peter Obi (PO)

The analysis of Peter Obi's campaign messages reveals several thematic and linguistic elements that contribute to the effectiveness of his rhetorical strategies. Through employing multiple coding techniques, the researchers categorized the rhetoric into key areas such as pathos, ethos, and logos, while also examining transparency and accountability. More so, linguistically, Obi's messages are characterized by a mix of assertive and emotive language, which amplifies their impact. The combination of strong declarative statements and emotional appeals not only conveys confidence but also ensures that the messages resonate with a broad audience. Language mixing, such as the inclusion of local phrases, further personalizes the communication, making it more accessible and engaging to diverse groups within the electorate.

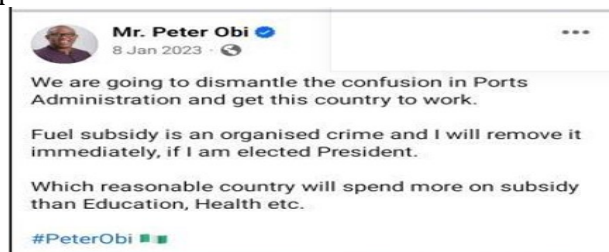


Fig. 7. Critique and Solution (Logos and Ethos)

Source: Facebook

Logos plays a crucial role in Obi's critique of existing policies, particularly in Fig. 7, where he challenges the logic behind the current fuel subsidy system, describing it as "an organised crime." This use of assertive language and logical reasoning helps frame his argument as rational and sensible, appealing to voters' sense of practicality and fairness. Through questioning the rationale of spending more on subsidies than on essential services like education and health, Obi effectively uses logical appeals to highlight inefficiencies and propose actionable solutions.



Fig. 8. Call to Unity (Pathos and Ethos)

Source: Facebook

The theme of ethos is central to Obi's campaign, as he emphasizes accountability and credibility. In Fig. 8, he states, "I call on Nigerians to hold me accountable to my promises," which directly appeals to the electorate's desire for trustworthy leadership. This assertive language establishes a strong ethical stance, portraying Obi as a candidate who is willing to be scrutinized and held responsible for his actions. Through making a pact with Nigerians, he reinforces his commitment to transparency and positions himself as a leader with integrity.

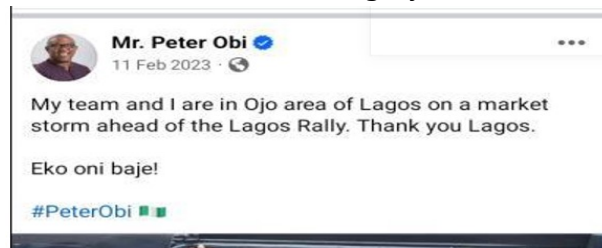


Fig. 9. Pathos (Local Appeal)

Source: Facebook

Fig. 9 shows that one prominent theme in Peter Obi's rhetorics is pathos which is evident in his use of emotive language to foster a sense of unity and urgency. In the first post, he uses the local phrase "Eko oni baje!" to connect emotionally with the Lagos audience, invoking regional pride and solidarity. This emotive expression serves to engage the electorate on a personal level, making the campaign feel relevant and immediate to the local populace. The use of local language enhances relatability and demonstrates a deep understanding of the cultural context, which can significantly boost the emotional appeal of the message.



Fig. 10. Call to Action

Source: X

In Fig. 10, Peter Obi, expresses a commitment to action (accountability and transparency) regarding his promises to the Nigerian people. He appeals to citizens to hold him accountable for the pledges he makes if elected, emphasizing that he has made a "pact" with them and intends to fulfill his commitments. The tone is one of responsibility and trust, indicating that he values the expectations of the electorate and is willing to be judged based on his actions and promises. The engagement metrics suggest that the tweet resonated with a significant number of people, reflecting interest and support for his message.



Fig. 11. Pathos (Visionary Appeal)

Source: X

In Fig. 11, Peter Obi employs a visionary appeal, with the phrase "the New Nigeria of our dreams" evoking hope and aspiration. This use of emotive language draws on the theme of national renewal, appealing to the electorate's desire for a brighter future.



Fig. 12. Personal Connection (Ethos and Pathos)

Source: X

Fig. 12 emphasizes a personal connection, beginning with "Fellow Nigerians" to foster inclusivity and unity. His statement, "I have Nigeria on my mind," uses personal and direct language to build trust and demonstrate commitment, aligning with the theme of dedicated leadership. Both Figures 11 and 12 utilize assertive and emotive expressions, enhancing their impact and ensuring resonance with the audience by presenting a confident and relatable vision for the country's future.

Discussion

Bola Ahmed Tinubu and Peter Obi employed distinct rhetorical strategies in their social media campaigns during the Nigerian presidential election, each reflecting their unique approaches to engaging voters. Tinubu's campaign messaging, characterized by a strategic blend of rhetorical appeals, showcases a strong reliance on logos, pathos, ethos, and the bandwagon effect. In his first image, Tinubu outlines specific policy proposals aimed at "widening horizons and expanding business reach," demonstrating a logical approach that emphasizes evidence-based reasoning. This logos appeal is further complemented by an emotional connection in his second image, where he emphasizes his relationships with various professional groups, including professors and market women. This attempt to foster trust and identification aligns with the pathos rhetorical appeal, effectively engaging the electorate's emotions (Nwaoboli et al., 2024; Nwaoboli & Uchenunu, 2024). The use of logos and pathos in Tinubu's messaging illustrates Aristotle's rhetorical theory, which posits that effective persuasion relies on the interplay of logical reasoning and emotional appeal. By strategically employing these appeals, Tinubu enhances his persuasive power and establishes a connection with voters that resonates on both rational and emotional levels.

Tinubu's commitment to establishing credibility is evident in images three and four, where he showcases his engagement with influential figures like the Imo State Governor and private sector leaders. By highlighting these high-profile connections, he strategically employs ethos to reinforce his authority as a leader capable of effecting change. His use of the Yoruba phrase *Emi Lokan*, meaning It is my turn, in the fifth image reflects a persuasive technique rooted in the bandwagon

effect, encouraging supporters to join a growing movement. Additionally, his sixth image emphasizes transparency and accountability, presenting clear, actionable policy proposals that convey a willingness to be held accountable for his campaign promises. Throughout his messaging, Tinubu employs assertive language and cultural expressions to foster inclusivity, appealing to a diverse electorate and enhancing the overall effectiveness of his rhetorical strategies. These elements align with the principles of ethos and the bandwagon effect as outlined in rhetorical theory (Asemah, Nwammuo, et al., 2017). By cultivating credibility through associations and a sense of collective identity, Tinubu positions himself as a relatable and trustworthy candidate, thus enhancing the persuasive impact of his campaign.

In contrast, Peter Obi's campaign rhetoric emphasizes unity, accountability, and logical critique. His messaging reveals a strong emphasis on pathos, particularly in his use of emotive language to foster regional pride, as seen in his message "Eko oni baje!" This local phrase connects emotionally with the Lagos audience, making his campaign feel relevant and immediate. Obi's focus on accountability is evident in his assertive declaration, "I call on Nigerians to hold me accountable to my promises," which appeals directly to the electorate's desire for trustworthy leadership and reinforces his commitment to transparency. This emphasis on accountability and emotional connection aligns with the rhetorical theory of pathos, illustrating how emotional appeals can effectively engage an audience's values and aspirations (Akinola-Badmus & Ojebuyi, 2022), thus enhancing the persuasiveness of a political message.

Obi also employs logos effectively, particularly when critiquing existing policies. In one of his posts, he describes the current fuel subsidy system as "an organised crime," using logical reasoning to frame his argument as rational and sensible. This critique not only highlights inefficiencies in the current system but also positions Obi as a candidate with practical solutions for pressing issues. His visionary appeal is encapsulated in statements about "the New Nigeria of our dreams," which evoke hope and aspiration, appealing to voters' desire for a brighter future. Additionally, Obi's emphasis on personal connection, beginning with phrases like "Fellow Nigerians," fosters inclusivity and unity, enhancing his credibility as a dedicated leader. These strategies reflect the principles of logos and pathos in rhetoric, showing how a combination of logical reasoning and emotional engagement can effectively connect with voters. By employing

Ugoala (2024) study agrees with the finding on the use of ethos when they avowed that emotional appeals play a significant role in shaping voters' perceptions. Specifically, Ugoala noted that Peter Obi's campaign rhetoric effectively employed emotive language to foster regional pride. Similarly, Nwaoboli et al. (2024) studies also align with the notion that Bola Ahmed Tinubu's campaign messaging featured a strategic blend of rhetorical appeals, showcasing a strong reliance on logos, pathos, and ethos. Also, Ashindorbe & Albert (2023) investigation into campaign rhetoric

and the quest for power in Nigeria's presidential elections supports the idea that Tinubu's rhetorical strategies focused on establishing authority through logical proposals and emotional connections. Similarly, Ikechukwu-Ibe & Aboh (2024) analysis of resistance in Nigeria's 2023 electoral rhetoric further reinforces the finding that Obi's messaging emphasized unity, accountability, and logical critique, resonating with voters seeking trustworthy leadership.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, the comparative rhetorical analysis of Peter Obi and Bola Ahmed Tinubu's social media campaigns reveals distinct approaches to engaging the electorate. Tinubu's strategically used logos, pathos, and ethos combined with cultural expressions and the bandwagon effect which effectively established his credibility and connected with voters. Conversely, Obi's emphasized on accountability, unity, and logical critique which resonated with his target audience, fostering a strong personal connection and regional pride. It is therefore recommended that: (1) Political candidates in Nigeria and at large should incorporate local expressions and address community-specific issues to foster a deeper bond with voters, as exemplified by Peter Obi's use of emotive language. (2) Political campaign managers in Nigeria should utilize data analytics to understand voter sentiments and preferences, refining rhetorical strategies to ensure campaign messages are relevant and impactful. (3) Voters and Civil Society Organizations should develop critical media literacy skills to effectively analyze political rhetoric and make informed decisions at the polls.

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