

**Music, Technology and Social Change: 2023 PDP Electioneering Campaigns in Delta State
as Paradigms**

by

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Abstract

Music and technology have long served as powerful tools for driving social change and shaping sociopolitical landscapes. In Delta State, Nigeria, the interplay between music and technological advancements has played a pivotal role in influencing electioneering campaigns across different eras. This paper explores the current effect of these dynamics on the society, with a forward-looking perspective on the future. Its findings aim to inform policymakers, campaign strategists, and cultural practitioners on harnessing these tools for progressive governance and political transformation. The study employed a mix of qualitative and quantitative approaches, as the subject involves historical, sociocultural, and technological dimensions. Data collection was carried through interviews and structured questionnaires. This methodology ensures a comprehensive exploration of how music and technology have shaped electioneering campaigns in Delta State, offering insights into their sociopolitical implications and future potential.

Key words: Music, Technology, Social Change, Election and Campaign.

Introduction

Advancements in digital technology have amplified the influence of music within political campaigns. Social media, streaming platforms, and digital production tools now enable political actors to reach wider and more technologically engaged audiences. The blending of Afrobeat, hip-hop, and indigenous musical styles has broadened the appeal of political messaging, allowing campaigns to resonate with diverse demographic groups. This evolution reflects the deepening synergy between music, technology, and political engagement. Scholars widely acknowledge music as essential to political branding and identity formation. Behr and Shively observe that music not only shapes public perception and mobilises citizens but also performs important cultural functions in Africa by preserving traditions and linking political narratives to everyday lived experiences (Behr 45; Shively 215).

This study explores the historical, contemporary, and potential future roles of music and technology in Delta State's electioneering environment. It analyses how these elements have influenced political mobilisation and public discourse, especially during the 2023 PDP campaigns, and examines music's communicative power in evoking emotions, unifying audiences, and shaping political opinion.

The research further considers emerging technologies—such as artificial intelligence and virtual reality—that may transform campaign strategies by enhancing voter engagement and creating immersive musical experiences. However, challenges, including misinformation and digital inequality remain critical concerns.

By focusing on Delta State's ethnic diversity—Anioma, Urhobo, Itsekiri, and Isoko—the study offers a locally grounded yet broadly applicable perspective on the interplay between music, technology, and electoral outcomes.

Methodology

This study adopts a case study approach to examine how political parties utilise music in Delta State elections. The People's Democratic Party (PDP) was selected as the focus due to its prominence as the largest political party in Delta State, having held power since 1991 and currently serving as Nigeria's largest opposition party. Since its inception in 2006, the PDP has consistently integrated music into its campaign strategy.

A qualitative approach was employed to explore the historical, sociocultural, and technological dimensions of this subject. Semi-structured interview guides featuring open-ended questions were used to investigate the role of music and technology in past, present, and future political campaigns.

Theoretical Framework

This study is based on two key theories among many proposed by scholars. According to Hall, the Cultural Studies Theory explores how music, as a cultural practice, interacts with technology to create meaning and influence resistance or compliance in electioneering (1997). Meanwhile, McLuhan's Technological Determinism asserts that technology drives societal and cultural change (9). This perspective helps analyse how developments in communication technology – such as radio, television, and social media – have reshaped electioneering campaigns in Delta State.

Conceptual Framework

Music serves as a powerful tool for communication, particularly for marginalized groups expressing their struggles and aspirations. In political contexts, campaign music plays a strategic role in mobilization, branding, and message dissemination. Songs used in electioneering, such as Barack Obama's 2008 campaign anthem *Yes We Can* by Will.i.am or Delta State, Nigeria's 2015 gubernatorial election song *E Don Happen*, have successfully resonated with voters by articulating political visions and collective aspirations (Delta State Broadcasting Service, 2025). These songs encapsulate candidates' values and promises while fostering unity and engagement among supporters.

On a broader scale, governments and political movements have also harnessed the power of music to propagate ideologies and build national identity. For example, national anthems and patriotic songs evoke a sense of unity and pride, reinforcing loyalty to the state. Turino (2008), as cited in Mambwe (45) notes that:

what makes music work, as with other expressive cultural practices such as dance and festivals, is that it remains an important way that people live out their collective identities as they create and sustain social groups.

The passage highlights how music played a transformative role in Delta State's 2019 elections, with personalized campaign songs like "Delta We Go Better" by Ossai Blessing blending praise for candidates with subtle critiques of opponents. These songs, often performed in local dialects and enriched with traditional beats, tapped into cultural differences to resonate with grassroots voters, shaping public perception and behavior. Agberia (110) observes that such musical narratives not only reflected the socio-political climate but also effectively energized and persuaded the electorate by building a sense of belonging across the Delta's diverse communities. However, unlike past political campaigns in Delta State, contemporary ones lack the lyrical depth needed to inspire and influence the electorate.

Technological advancements have significantly influenced the creation, distribution, and consumption of music, driving social change in the process. The interdisciplinary field of Critical

Studies on Music and Technology examines this evolving relationship, exploring how innovations – from mechanical instruments to digital platforms – shape musical production and perception. Scholars analyse how technological tools are adopted and adapted, highlighting their impact on both the global music industry and grassroots artistic practices. Born and Hesmondhalgh emphasise the power dynamics within these innovations, questioning who benefits and who is marginalised as the music-technology landscape shifts (34).

Technological changes reinforce or challenge existing social structures, including issues of ethnicity, gender, and class in musical spaces. Digital platforms like YouTube and Spotify have democratised music access, enabling marginalised artists to share their work globally without relying on traditional industry gatekeepers. By examining these transformations, Critical Studies on Music and Technology provides valuable insights into how technology shapes both the production and experience of music, reflecting broader societal shifts and influencing cultural and social transformations.

Historical Overview

Delta State, created in 1991 from the division of the former Bendel State, has experienced a political journey marked by a shift from military to civilian rule. Governed by a series of leaders, including James Ibori, Emmanuel Uduaghan, Ifeanyi Okowa, and the current governor, Sheriff Oborevwori – all from the People's Democratic Party (PDP). The state's political leadership reflects continuity and the dominance of a single party. This political evolution has been intertwined with cultural dynamics, especially through the use of music as a tool for mobilisation and identity formation during election campaigns.

Music has played a vital role in political communication in Delta State, evolving from traditional genres like Ekere and Isoko praise-singing to modern styles such as Afrobeat and hip-hop. Politicians have effectively used music to resonate with the values and aspirations of various communities, especially in PDP campaigns. In recent years, campaign music has become more sophisticated, involving collaborations with popular artists to craft songs that communicate political manifestos and foster a sense of unity. Scholars like Mambwe and Olayiwola note that these songs not only entertain but also influence voter perception and engagement, making music a powerful tool for shaping political narratives and connecting leaders with the electorate (46).

Technology in Past Electioneering Campaigns

In earlier decades, communication technology played a limited yet transformative role in electioneering campaigns, shaping how candidates communicated with voters. Traditional media

such as radio, and television were pivotal in reaching large audiences, serving as primary platforms for political messaging. Radio broadcasts, in particular, emerged as a crucial tool in the mid-20th century, allowing candidates to speak directly to the public and convey their policies, personalities, and campaign promises. The rise of television further revolutionised political communication by adding a visual element, enabling voters to assess candidates not only by their words but also by their demeanor and presentation.

In addition to mass media, campaigns leveraged African Indigenous Technologies, which laid the groundwork for more sophisticated political communication in later years. African Indigenous Technologies have historically contributed to community mobilization, information dissemination, and social structuring – core aspects of electioneering campaigns. Though modern technology has dominated recent elections, indigenous systems such as Town Criers, folk songs and indigenous music, masquerades and cultural performances are still relevant, especially in rural or traditional communities, as they address issues of misinformation and digital exclusion. They demonstrated the importance of accessibility and reach in electioneering, setting the stage for the digital revolution that would dramatically transform campaign strategies in the 21st century.

Media Technology in Present Electioneering Campaigns

Today, the media plays a far more integrated and sophisticated role in electioneering campaigns, fundamentally transforming the political landscape. Enli (76) highlights that social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter (X), and Instagram provide candidates with direct channels to engage with voters, enabling them to disseminate messages instantly and interactively. These platforms facilitate real-time communication, fostering greater voter participation and engagement. By leveraging digital platforms, candidates can amplify their reach through political jingles and build personalized connections with their supporters, making political communication more dynamic and accessible.

The increasing dependence on performances and musical renditions by many artists poses serious concerns. It is troubling when these artists, after receiving bribes, disseminate false information about politicians' character and accomplishments through their songs. Such actions mislead voters into supporting leaders who lack vision. This situation casts doubt on the credibility of elections and underscores the pressing need for clear regulations and ethical guidelines in campaign practices. As technology advances, it becomes essential to strike a balance between innovation and accountability to ensure transparent and fair electoral processes.

Music, Technology and Electioneering Campaigns in Delta State

Digital technology is transforming electioneering in Delta State by enabling candidates to overcome geographical barriers and connect with a wider audience. Cheeseman et al. affirms that studies have shown that Nigerian politicians increasingly utilize WhatsApp groups to communicate directly with grassroots supporters (148). Music plays a powerful role on WhatsApp

and other communication platforms, serving as a tool for mobilization, persuasion, and emotional connection. Politicians and campaign teams often circulate jingles, theme songs, and culturally resonant tunes through WhatsApp groups, voice notes, and status updates to reinforce their messages and create memorable slogans. These musical pieces are crafted to reflect local languages, values, and issues, enhancing relatability and grassroots appeal. Music's ability to transcend literacy barriers makes it especially effective in reaching diverse audiences, while its viral potential on digital platforms amplifies campaign visibility and engagement across different demographics.

Multimedia Campaigns and Social Change

Multimedia platforms that incorporate sound and music have significantly transformed political campaigning strategies in Delta State, Nigeria. Traditionally, political mobilization in the region relied heavily on indigenous forms of communication such as Town Criers, folk songs, masquerades, and cultural performances. These methods allowed politicians to connect with local communities through culturally resonant messages. In contemporary times, however, the integration of music into digital platforms has redefined this process. Politicians now use theme songs, campaign jingles, and live musical performances featuring both artists and candidates to establish emotional connections with voters. These musical strategies not only entertain but also serve as powerful tools for political expression, policy promotion, and supporter engagement across Delta State's diverse ethnic landscape.

The rise of digital technologies has further enhanced music's role in political campaigns by increasing reach and interaction, particularly among younger voters. Social media platforms like TikTok and Instagram, which prioritize short-form, sound-driven content, have enabled campaign messages to spread rapidly and organically. These platforms allow political content to become viral through music, evoking emotional resonance and encouraging community dialogue. As digital tools like AI-curated playlists and immersive technologies evolve, campaigners in Delta State can leverage these innovations for deeper voter engagement. However, this also comes with challenges such as misinformation and digital inequity, which must be addressed to ensure that the benefits of multimedia campaigning are inclusive and ethically applied.

Analysis of Music and Electioneering Campaign in Delta State

Past electioneering campaigns in Delta State were predominantly grassroots-driven, marked by physical rallies, town hall meetings, and door-to-door canvassing. Political campaigns relied heavily on personal interactions, with candidates engaging local leaders and community influencers to garner support. Indigenous campaign systems such as folk songs and indigenous music, masquerades and cultural performances were common, and the messaging often

emphasized ethnic identities – drawing on the diverse backgrounds of the Urhobos, Itsekiris, Ijaws, and others – to secure votes, even though this sometimes intensified communal tensions.

In contrast, modern electioneering in Delta State has embraced technological advancements and digital communication to create more sophisticated campaigns. Contemporary candidates, such as Sheriff Oborevwori and his running mate, Monday Onyeme, under the PDP platform in 2023 leveraged social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp to circulate jingles and theme songs alongside live-streamed events to reinforce their messages to reach a broader and more tech-savvy audience.

The 2023 Delta State election campaign showcased over 400 musicians, DJs, across Delta State who unanimously endorsed the PDP ticket of Sheriff Oborevwori and his running mate, Monday Onyeme in Asaba, citing confidence in continuity and growth under PDP governance. This shows how music has become a vital instrument for political expression, blending technology and social change to reach and mobilise the electorate.

Analysis of two popular electioneering campaign songs used in Delta State during political campaigns, particularly in 2023 gubernatorial elections, drawing on their lyrical themes, linguistic strategies, cultural relevance, and political messaging:

"Delta for Sheriff" by Various Artists (2023 Gubernatorial Election)

Context: This song supported Sheriff Oborevwori, the PDP candidate in the 2023 Delta State gubernatorial election. Performed by a coalition of Delta-based musicians during campaign events and media campaigns;

Lyrical Themes & Messaging: Lines such as "Delta for Sheriff", "Sheriff we want, Sheriff we need", "M.O.R.E. agenda go bring better Delta" or "our future dey sure" serve as campaign chants, reinforcing the candidate's brand;

Regional Balance: Lyrics often referenced support across Delta Central, South, and North to reinforce ethnic harmony and zone-to-zone solidarity;

Youth Inclusion: Parts of the song were youth-centric, speaking to empowerment, jobs, and education;

Language and Style: Code-switching between English, Pidgin, and native dialects (Urhobo, Itsekiri, Isoko) to appeal to different groups. Afrobeats-style instrumental with rhythmic call-and-response made it danceable and suitable for street rallies and concerts. The use of political slogans like "Street Credibility," "Na Sheriff we want," and "MORE Agenda" embedded the campaign narrative into pop culture; and

Impact: It became an anthem for Oborevwori's campaign buses, jingles, and youth gatherings. It helped to consolidate support from entertainers and youth, particularly in urban areas like Warri, Ughelli, and Sapele.

The majority of the electorates described candidate as “the man we trust”, “tested and trusted”, or “God-sent”, to build credibility and emotional appeal.

"E Don Happen" by Aghogho (Gubernatorial Election)

Context: Used during the 2015 Delta State gubernatorial campaign, this song supported the People's Democratic Party (PDP) candidate;

Lyrical Themes and Messaging: Victory and Fulfillment: The phrase “E don happen” (meaning “It has happened”) is a Pidgin English expression of triumph, suggesting that the expected victory has materialized;

Hope and Change: The song carried a tone of optimism and renewal, promoting the candidate as a change agent who would bring development and peace;

Inclusiveness: The song addresses various ethnic groups (Anioma, Urhobo, Isoko, Itsekiri, and Ijaw), fostering a pan-Delta identity;

Language and Style: Pidgin English was the dominant medium – informal, widely spoken, and easily understood by grassroots audiences. The chant-like chorus encouraged crowd participation and made it easy to remember; and

Impact: It energized campaign rallies across Delta North and beyond, becoming a rallying cry especially in Asaba, and surrounding communities.

It helped brand the candidate’s campaign as people-focused and grassroots-oriented.

“As e dey sweet us, e go dey pain dem” by G5 Politicians:

This was often chanted by supporters of the G5 politicians, particularly former Governor Wike. This phrase became a rallying refrain and symbol of political defiance and confidence, though not a formal campaign song with full published lyrics. Its chant-like nature made it synonymous with the election spirit. The phrase translates loosely to “As it pleases us, it will pain them,” and was used as a triumphal chant at rallies to express defiance and assert political resolve. The song mobilizes supporters while subtly discrediting opponents through contrast.

The three songs analysed above leveraged music as a tool of political mobilization, with a deep understanding of local languages, shared cultural identity, and emotional messaging. While “E Don Happen” focused on hope and unity, “Delta for Sheriff” emphasized continuity, youth involvement, and pan-ethnic support. These campaign songs exemplify how political music in Delta State fuses entertainment with persuasive communication to sway public opinion and energize the electorate.

Implications for Policy and Practice

In Nigeria, election campaigns using copyrighted music are strictly governed by the Copyright Act of 2022. The law requires that any public performance or reproduction of a musical work must be authorised by the copyright owner, meaning that political parties must secure proper licenses

before using songs in rallies, advertisements, or online media. With digital platforms and streaming services on the rise, the unauthorised use of music has become a significant legal and ethical concern, potentially resulting in litigation, fines, and reputational damage for both political entities and artists.

Enforcement of these regulations is increasingly complicated by the ease with which music can be shared on social media. High-profile cases – such as the condemnation by Fela Kuti’s family over the unauthorised use of his song in a Presidential campaign, as well as controversies involving artists like Davido and Burna Boy – highlight the tensions between political messaging and intellectual property rights. Sag (142) advocates for the development of clearer licensing policies, closer collaboration between campaign teams and copyright holders, and enhanced digital rights management, including the use of AI-based content detection systems, to ensure that artistic integrity is upheld in political communication.

The Future of Music and Technology in Electioneering

Technological advances and the growing influence of social media are transforming political campaigns, with music set to play a more dynamic role. Future strategies may include AI-generated soundtracks and personalized playlists that cater to specific demographics, making music an essential tool for shaping voter sentiment and enhancing campaign messaging.

Modern electioneering is increasingly data-driven, employing microtargeting on platforms like Facebook and Twitter, as well as AI-powered chatbots and virtual assistants to reach voters in real time. Moreover, innovations such as blockchain technology are being used to secure campaign finance and voting processes, while augmented and virtual reality create immersive experiences. However, these advancements also bring challenges, including the rise of digital misinformation and deepfakes that can distort public opinion.

Ultimately, as music becomes more intertwined with emerging technologies, it will evolve from a mere background element into a central feature of political communication. By embedding powerful messages into cultural memory, music not only drives immediate influence but also fosters a lasting impact, transcending language and cultural barriers to address global issues like climate change and human rights.

Challenges and Ethical Considerations in the Use of Music and Technology

The fusion of music and technology has transformed music creation and distribution, but it also presents notable challenges related to copyright infringement, fair compensation, and ethical concerns. Digital platforms make unauthorized copying and distribution easier, leading to financial losses for artists and raising questions about intellectual property rights (Marshall 47). The use of artificial intelligence in music production further complicates issues of authenticity and creativity

(Briot, Hadjeres, & Pachet 146), while data privacy concerns emerge as music platforms collect extensive user information. Moreover, technology has democratized music production, allowing its use in political campaigns and activism, particularly in places like Nigeria, where music strongly influences election outcomes and public sentiment (Behr 33). These developments call for a balance between innovation and ethical, legal protections in the evolving digital landscape.

Conclusion

Music and technology synergise to create dynamic and effective electioneering campaigns. As both fields continue to evolve, their integration will likely play an even greater role in shaping political landscapes worldwide. Music's versatility makes it a powerful agent in electioneering campaigns and social change efforts. Its ability to stir emotions, unify groups, and disseminate messages ensures that it will remain a critical medium for influencing public discourse. Technology can amplify this impact by using tools like AI to personalize music selection for specific demographics or leveraging platforms like Spotify and YouTube to reach audiences effectively.

Based on the foregoing, campaign song lyrics should genuinely reflect the state of the economy and assess how well the candidate can deliver or has fulfilled his campaign promises. By resonating emotionally and intellectually, music fosters solidarity among listeners, inspiring them to engage with political and social causes. This will provide a foundation for the masses to decide whether to support or oppose a candidate or party. Often, the voting decisions of the underprivileged are influenced by the views of the youth, who make up the majority of campaigners.

To enhance the use of music and technology in campaigns, it is essential to prioritise the alignment of both with the campaign's core message and target audience. Music can evoke emotions and create memorable experiences, so selecting tracks or compositions that resonate with the campaign's tone and objectives is crucial. However, the effectiveness of these methods depends on overcoming digital divides and ensuring that the approach remains inclusive for all segments of the electorate.

Music's transformative power lies in its ability to transcend barriers, articulate shared emotions, and inspire collective action. By amplifying voices of resistance, fostering solidarity, raising awareness, and leaving lasting legacies, music remains a vital tool in the pursuit of social justice and societal change.

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