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SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE IN THE COVERAGE OF UNITED STATES 2020 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS CAMPAIGN

The purpose of this study is to investigate the heavy usage of social media in the upcoming U.S presidential elections campaigns. There are several political parties in the U.S with 2020 presidential candidates; however, this study is on the two leading political parties, the Republican and the Democratic Party. Both the Democratic and Republican candidates have resulted to online political campaigns with twitter and Facebook seen to be the platform of choice. The questions to be answered in this article are: why do presidential candidates prefer social media to other forms of media for their campaigns? What are the mostly used social media platforms? What impact do social media platforms have on the election outcomes? Since the media is inextricably connected to elections, there is the need to interrogate the social media coverage of the U.S presidential election campaigns. The study relied on descriptive research design and premised on Agenda Setting theory as espoused by Maxwell E. McCombs and Donald L. Shaw (1972). Purposive sampling is used to select social media contents with messages particularly from twitter posts of the presidential candidates talking about the presidential elections and the responses or comments from the followers or supporters. This data was extracted between the periods of March and August 2020. Textual analysis is the main form of data analysis in the study. The study findings are useful to the media houses and media in their course of media coverage of elections. It contributes to knowledge of how media content is received by the society and the way society behavioral pattern is shaped through media. The findings add to the existing literature on media coverage of elections.

Key Terms: Media Coverage, Presidential Elections, Campaign.

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