

## Social Media Technology and the 2011 Presidential Election in Cameroon

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### Abstract

*The social media communication platforms, also known as social networking sites, SNS ( Facebook, YouTube etc) played a role in the just ended presidential elections in Cameroon. The power of using social media has become the magic wand that propelled Barack Obama to victory in the United States of America. His counterpart, Senator John McCain admission that he was not familiar with new media technology hurt him tremendously in the Presidential election. The success of Obama quickly ushered in a new era of global politics. Candidates, the world over no longer have to rely solely on the old media systems (radio, newspaper and regular television channels) to get messages out to the electorate. A much more efficient means would be to follow them on Twitter , Facebook or through short PSAs on YouTube. On the other hand, social media technology played a significant role in the Arab Spring that saw dictatorial regimes in North Africa toppled within a short space of time. But Africa sub-Saharan has had a different experience with social media. Most elections in East, South, Central and West Africa are now using social media for wide dissemination. This paper examines some social media sites like Facebook, Twitter and YouTube using qualitative content analysis to analyze postings, comments and other content related materials used during the October 2011 presidential elections in Cameroon.*

**Keywords:** Social Media, Cameroon, Presidential Election

### Introduction

The social media phenomenon transcends inter-human global communications. Its footprints are felt across all the spectrum of human endeavors. The seemingly mighty force of these innovative tools

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threatens to overturn face-to-face (FtF) human interactions (Strate, 2010) and its effect remains controversial among contemporary communication scholars. Now in the era of geo-political weight lifting where the race to the top seems to be an inevitable human quest and genuine leadership remains scarce, power wielders have invaded electronic sphere as well as the citizenry. The former has discovered a new frontier to launch campaigns and canvass votes from the electorate all over the world while the latter has discovered a sphere to galvanize the people for resistance. That place is the social media ecological battle fields (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube etc). The force of electronic sphere vindicates Canadian media scholar Marshall McLuhan's vision of what Lawrence Grossman (1996) aptly calls "the electronic republic". Electronic communication is surpassing face-to-face communication and its future is even brighter.

The acting stage for politics is shifting from the face-to-face town halls meetings and rallies in the stadia to the virtual media/blogosphere. These new mediated platforms originally intended for social and cultural exchanges between friends and families around the globe has recently seen a 'Tsunami' wave of political activities involving politicians and ordinary citizens. Politicians are always in love with numbers. The fact that over 500 billion people use social media at home, school and work place has made it a fertile ground for politicians. Among this unprecedented number are also Cameroonians in the central part of Africa.

In October 2011, Cameroon held its presidential election in the wake of the Arab Spring that saw dictators in North Africa swept out of power as a result of the overwhelming force of the social media pushing people to the street. No long term serving African leader till date in sub-Saharan Africa has been toppled mainly through the invincible force of social media ( i.e Facebook, Twitter and YouTube). The case of Cote D'Ivoire is worth mentioning. According to Guéye (2011) the impact of the social media communication tool was effective after the November 2010 presidential election where it became evident that Alassane Ouattara had beaten Laurent Gbagbo in the election. The latter being the incumbent refused to cede power thus bringing about a post electoral violence that brought about his ouster. Anna Guéye reporting in the newspaper "Minorité" discusses the role of Facebook and Twitter when the government

singled handedly controlled the radio and television media outlets. Some have also used social media alongside opposition candidates to garner votes from the people. What is responsible for the lukewarm attitude of sub-Saharan Africa to thwart the internet revolutionary wind that was gushing from North Africa can only be speculated and historians will have to figure that out. But what is intriguing and perhaps obvious is that the rate of internet penetration in this part of the continent and couple with the high illiteracy rate is worth studying. Again this is pure speculation and nobody for sure can provide the answers without examining other extraneous variables. What is certain is that some of the countries in the region are using the power of the social media for other political related matters. Recent studies carried out in the wake of social media penetration in the political arena in sub-Saharan Africa indicate robust e-democratic activities and Cameroon is no exception.

Cameroon is situated in the sub-Saharan part of Africa, more precisely in West Africa. For the last fifty or so years since gaining independence from their French and English colonial masters, Cameroon has had only two presidents. The first President Amadou Ahidjo ruled for over 25 years and handed power to his then Prime Minister, Paul Biya and the latter has been in power for over 28 years. These two presidents ruled under the single party politics. But in the early nineties, Paul Biya was forced to yield to the Eastern wind of change sweeping through the entire continent for multiparty political system. Cameroon then saw the birth of multiple opposition parties that would compete with the government party, Cameroon People Democratic Movement (CPDM) but no opposition party candidate has been able to win the presidency since its creation. They have inroads to the parliament by winning some seats but never the majority to actually compete with the CPDM. They have relied on the traditional media systems, radio, television and newspaper. But the radio and television have, by and large, been state-owned and so have been instrumental in pushing the political agenda of the incumbent. This last election was probably the very first time new media platforms (YouTube, Facebook and Twitter) played a part as another media for disseminating political information.

Like most other African countries in the sub-Sahara, Cameroon faces telecommunication infrastructure nightmare. According to the recent Internet world statistics on internet users

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(<http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats1.htm>) Africa has barely 140 million internet users with a population of well over 1 billion people. Of this number, Nigeria leads the entire continent with the highest Internet users followed closely by Egypt and Morocco in North Africa. The only other African country in the sub-Saharan Africa to follow Nigeria is Kenya then South Africa. Cameroon does not feature among the top countries in Africa on Internet users. But the number of users is increasing geometrically as seen below, the reason why these politicians took to Facebook, Twitter and YouTube to broadcast their political message (<http://www.internetworldstats.com/af/cm.htm>). According to Internet World Statistics, the Yahoo portal top the list for most users closely followed by Facebook and Youtube.

### Internet use in Cameroon

Internet Usage and Population Statistics:

| YEAR | Users   | Population | % Pen. | GDP p.c.*  | Usage Source        |
|------|---------|------------|--------|------------|---------------------|
| 2000 | 20,000  | 16,853,500 | N/A    | N/A        | <a href="#">ITU</a> |
| 2006 | 370,000 | 18,467,692 | 2.0 %  | US\$ 1,010 | <a href="#">ITU</a> |
| 2009 | 725,000 | 18,879,301 | 3.8 %  | US\$ 1,153 | <a href="#">ITU</a> |

Note: Per Capita GDP in US dollars, source: United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs

As seen in the figure above there is a geometrical increase in Internet use from 2006 to 2009. Given the fact that the presidential election took place two years after this data was released, there is every supposition to be made that approximately there has been a 5% increase between 2009 and 2011 for internet usage in Cameroon.

Cameroonian politicians, be they incumbent or opposition have recognized the overriding influence of this new media and the uncontrollable wave of people subscribing to it. They have seen that tapping into this media will not only render them contemporary but more importantly, relevant.

The fact that only 6% of the nation actually have internet connections to their portable phones or at home did not hinder political candidates to exploit this media to publish their manifesto and persuade the citizens to vote for them. There were 23 candidates that vied for the just ended presidential election in Cameroon. These candidates included the incumbent President Paul Biya. Cameroon, like most other sub-Saharan African countries witnessed what is often referred to as “plural party democracy’ in the early nineties. As a result, the one party state of Cameroon National Union ( CNU) came to an end. This plurality ushered in a new political dispensation in Cameroon in the early nineties. The President of the Republic announced political liberalization on the nation’s airwaves and that set in a rush to new political party formations. Since then close to forty parties exist in Cameroon. The past election saw over twenty-three candidates of different political parties accepted by the Supreme Court to run against the incumbent President Biya.

These parties in the past have resorted to mostly newspaper coverage, television and radio announcement of their election rallies, interviews and debates. This time it was different. Some of the party leaders including the incumbent and the other few opposition candidates made greater use of social media to reach the electorate at home and abroad. In fact, this was the first time that most Cameroonian citizens abroad could follow the elections in Cameroon in real time through many assorted new media devices. As the election results were read over the nation’s national radio and television, people were following it abroad on streaming videos on certain websites. This was indeed a novelty and an indication of the direction of future power politics in Cameroon. Gone are the days when the incumbent party could monopolize the radio and television to send messages. These days social media sites like weblogs, Facebook, Twitter and YouTube are fast replacing the traditional forms of communication.

### **Social Media and Presidential Candidates**

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**Paul Biya (incumbent)**

Although there were 23 candidates that were selected by the Supreme Court to contest for the election only few of the candidates actually made use of the social media to reach their electorate. According to Tande Dibussi (<http://www.dibussi.com/2011/09/cameroon-election-social-media.html>) in his article titled “ 2011 presidential election: How the candidates are navigating the social media landscape” published on his website on September 18, 2011, the social media frenzy was mainly used by a few candidates to reach their outside electorates and make their visibility also known to the international community. The texts, images and videos used on Facebook/Twitter/YouTube/Flickr will be analyzed from the latent meanings (symbolism, irony, satire etc) and nuances found on the sites to discuss the role played by social media in the election. Among the candidates that used social media for political outreach was the incumbent, Paul Biya. A Face book page was created for the incumbent president but was managed by a third party. That Facebook page still exist today (<https://www.facebook.com/PaulBiya.PageOfficielle>).

During the October 2011 presidential election, there were 64 postings directly related to the presidential elections from September 16 to October 15. This time period was selected as it fell between the time of the campaign and election. There were other postings on the incumbent’s Facebook page but the ones that were posted after October 15 were not analyzed for this study. In all, there were 64 posts from September 06 to October 15. All the postings were accompanied with the photographs of the authors. In all the 64 messages, 8 were written in English and 66 in French. There were roughly 12 females who posted comments compared to 58 males. There was one neutral posting (without a photograph). The incumbent uploaded seven photographs of his. Two of the photographs were passport sized while the remaining five were photographs taken at the campaign rallies and meetings with the incumbent party members, Cameroon People’s Democratic Party (CPDM).

The postings on the Facebook page had negative and positive contents. By negative, that implies that the comments by the authors suggested the incumbent ought not to run or to give up power. There were postings that called for his resignation on the grounds that he has been so old and that time had come

for him to retire and leave the scene for the younger generation. People also wrote about the fact that they have been unemployed for so long that the only way they can aspire to a progressive life in the country was for him to hand over the mantle to another person.

With regards to Twitter, President Paul Biya had a Twitter account created for him that was used to launch party slogans and messages to encourage people to go to the polls. He himself never twitted and in spite of the number of followers that followed his twitter page during the election, there was no one that twitted using the hashtag that could be seen by the public.

### **Kah Walla ( *Opposition Candidate* )**

Of all the presidential candidates, Kah Walla, a female Anglophone candidate was the only one who made greater use of social media and most importantly Facebook and YouTube. At present, she has almost about 5000 followers. But with respect to the October 2011 presidential election, this study will only examine postings on her Facebook page from late September 2011 to October 15, 2011. Her Facebook postings were in English and French. Even though she is an Anglophone, one would think that there will be more postings in English than French. On the contrary, there are more postings in French than in English. From late September to October 9, just after the proclamation of the result, there were a total of 120 postings. These postings included her own individual postings and that of her fans. She contributed regularly to her Facebook page. There were over 38 still photographs and five YouTube video links. The still photographs were mostly made up of campaign stops with followers. She also had video postings of her campaign rallies as a link to her wall post. This link would take the fans to her campaign messages and stump speeches. Of all the 105 messages that were posted on her site during and briefly after the presidential election, there were no negative messages. By negative it implies there was no message content that advises her not to run or that she was unqualified to run for the President of Cameroon as was the case with President Paul Biya. On the contrary all the messages with the exception of one that questioned her style, the rest were largely encouraging her to win. They saw her campaign as

unprecedented because she was the first female Cameroonian candidate since independence to run for the Presidency of the Republic.

One other observation noted during this brief period of analyzing her site was the fact that during the actual voting day, her Facebook page was giving updates on the situation at the polling stations. This was one of the postings about the situation on the voting ground: “Ngoulemakong refused CPP electoral committee members from observing”. CPP stands for Cameroon People Party for which she was the leader. For a successful voting mechanism to be in place, all the party representatives whose leaders were approved for the election were allowed to observe the conduct of the election. Constitutionally speaking, members from each party running for the election were allowed to send representatives to observe the polling stations and be present during vote count. When the result was read over the national airwaves, the overwhelming message on her site was “denounce the results”.

Like the incumbent President Paul Biya, Kah Walla, did not make use of her twitter account. She was more inclined in using Facebook and YouTube including her website and messages on the national weblogs that contained Cameroonian users. It was not uncommon to read her regular event postings on Cameroonians listserv and discussion groups like Camnetwork, Mbonbani etc. She made her presence felt on YouTube. Since July 2011 when she created a YouTube account, she has well over 13 clips most them featuring her Campaign videos, rallies and TV interviews. Some of them have over three thousand hit. On the eve of the October 2011 presidential election, one of her rallying cry was to get as many people as possible to register . The title of the video,” Kah Walla, 2011 une vision pour le Cameroon” (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0WifTHkh8XA&list=UUH6LLzHC1byF-WQTndxjtdw&index=1&feature=plcp>) had more than 3000 viewers on YouTube. Of all the Presidential Candidate for the October 2011 Cameroon Elections, Kah Walla, was the sole candidate who put social media to active use.

**Ben Muna, Paul Ayah, Dang Esther, Garga Haman et al.**

These other presidential candidates made very little inroads to social media to connect with their electorates. In fact, of all the candidates during this election, Dang Esther was the only candidate who made greater use of the Flickr. This is a social media tool that enables users to upload photographs that can be seen by the public. She uploaded pictures of her campaign stops and also informed voters about her forthcoming radio interview etc. Presently on her Flickr page, there are pictures of her in the living room with her grand children and others of her visiting local shopping centers and landmark areas in Cameroon. Ben Muna on the other hand was also a candidate that used YouTube. He posted campaign videos for wider dissemination as can be seen with this one:

(<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XvTjjNT5PF4&feature=plcp>)

### **Analysis**

Social media communication deterritorializes inter-human communication. We are now living in an age where face-to-face communication is almost taking the back seat. People are more concerned about meeting and creating friendship online. Human communication has evolved to the level where technology now powers interaction. Without making a presence on the social media, one can experience dearth of virtual human contact. It is not uncommon to find that the easiest means to reach people in the remote areas all across the world is through mobile phones and Internet. This tendency is gaining ground in Africa and most especially in Cameroon where subscriber rate for cell phones is growing geometrically as seen on page 4. Some people with smart phones like black berries in Cameroon do have wireless communication on them that can enable them to use social media like Facebook, Twitter and YouTube.

But from the data shown above about the role played by social media in the October 2011 presidential election in Cameroon, one thing is clear: The candidates were not exploiting the advantages of the social media to the maximum to reach the electorate. There are three reasons for this passive attitude:

- 1) *Social media is powered by the Internet.*

The Internet connectivity in Cameroon as discussed earlier has been very slow as compared to other African countries. In order for the candidates to fully exploit the advantages of YouTube, Facebook and Twitter, the government has to invest heavily in the telecommunication sector. The people need to have quick, easy and accessible Internet connection with enough bandwidth to carry voice, texts, images and video data. This will not only help during election and campaign but can actually smoothen communication between the people and the government and the international community. With electronic communication almost defining interpersonal, group and mass communication, there is no way the Cameroon government can ignore its impact. The effect of social media communication in Egypt, Lybia and Tunisia should actually be a wakeup call for Cameroon and many other African countries in the sub-region. It is very clear from the data discussed above that Kah Walla, was the only Presidential candidate who effectively used social media (Facebook and YouTube).

It was thanks to her brilliant use of Facebook that she has become a veritable face of opposition to the government at home and abroad. It is quite evident on her page that there were photographs posted from her face-to-face interaction with the people in the urban and rural areas in Cameroon. It is quite evident on her Facebook page that people abroad could lend her the support she needed. The only way that Cameroon can be visible abroad is to utilize social media to the fullest. Social media and most especially Facebook is now becoming the main form of communication for most agencies in the world because it has over 500 billion subscribers. There is no one in the world who would not like to tap the support of the majority of people. The aim of politicians is to increase the number of participants. The days of billboard, road signs, radio announcement and television interviews and newspaper citations are fast dying out and the days of blogs, Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, Pinterest etc are fast taking over our lives. People are having little time nowadays to sit for hours and hours on the sofa watching television or reading a newspaper from the newsstand. Rather, more and more people and especially the younger generation are spending hours and hours on end on their cell phones (Texting, tweeting, listening to music, Facebooking etc) or on computer (reading, watching YouTube videos) so the more we concentrate

our efforts on this sector of the economy, the better we will be to get to largest population out for a political rally or voting booth.

Twitter was not used effectively by all the candidates. The reason might be due to the fact that Cameroonians are not yet exposed to this system. Again if the radio and television stations in Cameroon were encouraging the people by creating their own Tweeter handles and letting listeners know that they can tweet their reaction to a given phenomenon to the station then Tweeter use will flourish in Cameroon. It only takes a will and financial investment for such an initiative to take root. As already seen, Paul Biya, Kah Walla, Dang Esther and Ben Muna, had Tweeter accounts with significant followers, but they themselves never tweeted. President Paul Biya used his Tweeter page to post party slogans. Tweeter enables interpersonal, group and mass communication. It can serve the purposes of rallying especially the young population to pose questions to their leaders and receive valuable feedback. It can be used for town hall meetings. President Paul Biya can sit in the Unity Palace and receive Tweets about social, economic and political issues that Cameroonians want him to address. And instead of setting up television cameras with crew members, complicated lighting and sound systems that can take hours for installation, a simple projector linked to a laptop and one camera for visibility can serve the purpose for him meeting with Cameroonians. This will also encourage his cabinet to resort to this new way of meeting with people under their jurisdiction. Also it was noted during the Presidential election that two candidates used two different social media tools that can also be effective in getting followers.

Esther Dang used Flickr and Ben Muna used YouTube. By using Flickr, Esther Dang established herself as the first female Cameroonian Presidential candidate to use this medium. This is an easy medium to upload pictures and connect with the people. Since Esther is of the opposition party and she might encounter difficulties having her campaign photos released through the traditional media, Flickr could be the way out. The same can be said of Ben Muna who used YouTube. YouTube seems to be the quickest way to have video footage on the Internet. By belonging to the opposition party, Ben Muna, might encounter difficulties with the mainstream media to have his sound bites or party slogans,

campaign stops and interviews broadcast on national television. In that case he can resort to YouTube and encourage his followers to log on and watch his messages.

2) *The force of the traditional media systems ( radio, newspapers and television)*

The traditional media are still playing important roles in Cameroon when it comes to message dissemination. Literacy rate in Cameroon is still very low. There are over 10 national Short Wave radio stations in the country covering the 10 provinces in the country. Apart from this, there also exist numerous FM Radio stations. These stations have programs that broadcast in local languages but French and English dominate in the stations. So there is no doubt that radio has a very powerful role in the lives of the people. That is why presidential candidates still exploit the radio medium. Television too seems to be largely present in most household in Cameroon. But rolling power outages prevent transmission to some areas in the country. The urban cities enjoy relative power privileges. Sometimes they too suffer power outages for days that make television transmission problematic. Newspaper circulation is mostly in the cities since they constitute the areas with high literacy rates. Since 1990 when multiparty took roots in the country, there has been an explosion of private papers that act like the voice of the opposition parties. Since the national government-sponsored radio stations (CRTV) and the Cameroon Tribune national newspaper monopolize the political activities of the incumbent party, Cameroon People's Democratic Movement (CPDM), the private radio, television and newspaper media help to push the activities of the opposition parties (SDF, CPP, AFP UNDP,UDC etc) .

One reason for the reluctance of the incumbent in using the social media platforms to disseminate information about the party is due to the fact that he had the plethora of traditional media at his disposal and all the journalist working in those stations are government paid employees. A government paid employee who challenges the incumbent President Paul Biya can suffer incarceration of all sorts like termination, punitive transfer or jail term.

3) *Cell phones for texting and voice talk.*

*"International Conference on ICT for Africa 2013, February 20 -23, Harare, Zimbabwe"*

There are two main cell phones carriers in Cameroon: MTN and Orange. These cell phones are available to a large majority of Cameroonians for voice and texting. There are a minority of Cameroonians with smart phones in Cameroon that would have Internet access should in case they intend to use social media for a given purpose. But the fact that a significant number of Cameroonians are increasingly hooked up with the internet as evidenced on the data from the United Nation Department of Economic and Social Affairs is an indication that Internet activities such as social media will be robust in the coming years. Also according to Social Baker that ranks Facebook usage by country, Cameroon has 493, 960 Facebook users (<http://www.socialbakers.com/facebook-statistics/>). This by itself is a significant development given that the telecommunication infrastructure in the country is still fragile. This is an indication that the future for Internet activities in the country is bright not only for political activities but also for social, economic and cultural growth.

### **Discussion and Conclusion**

New media communications has slowly gained ground in political activities in Cameroon. It was not surprising to find that only a handful of presidential candidates ventured to use social media. They discovered that there was no way to march backwards while the rest of the world is marching forward. They clearly understood the implication of using these new media tools given the fact they too were consciously aware of the fact that only about 496 thousand Cameroonians bothered to use social media. But they wanted to exploit all possibilities to reach the electorate and who knows what that effect has been given the fact that even though Kah Walla has emerged as the candidates who made effective use of the social media as opposed to her counterparts, she could not win the presidency.

In fact, with the outpouring of support that Kah Walla enjoyed as evidenced in her Facebook and YouTube postings, she gained a lot of popularity with her electorates, but when the results were read over the traditional media (radio), she could only secured 11% of the total vote counts while the incumbent President, Paul Biya who used effective traditional media outlet gained 78% of the total vote count.

It is hard to speculate the victory of President Paul Biya as having been as a result of his effective use of the traditional media as opposed to the new media communicative systems. What is more important is the fact that even though the public traditional media systems that are state owned largely broadcast his messages, activities and rallies, his grass root organizational crew actually gave him the victory. He was the incumbent and the fact that the irregularities of the voting procedures were unanimously reported especially by the international observers did not hinder his victory.

It should be noted that all the previous presidential elections in Cameroon have always been fraught with irregularities but that have never stopped President Paul Biya from being confirmed by the Supreme Court. In spite of the overwhelming power of using the traditional media system by President Paul Biya, he also had a Facebook and Twitter page created for him. The fact that he too saw the importance of venturing to use social media for political means also shows the important role social media is playing in political elections in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Kah Walla came in second with 11% of the total vote count and being a female candidates and competing for the presidential election for the very first time shows that she has a very promising future. It is very difficult to speculate if the use of the social media played a significant part in her beating the other opposition party candidates; that will be the subject of another research.

This study intended to demonstrate the role that social media played in the October 2011 Presidential election in Cameroon. It analyzed the Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Flickr pages of some of the Presidential candidates. It was discovered that none of them made effective use of more than two tools of the social media. In fact, it was also discovered that President Paul Biya had more negative messages posted on his Facebook page than Kah Walla, Dang Esther and Ben Muna.

Kah Walla, had the highest number of positive postings on both her Facebook and YouTube postings. Dang Esther was the only one with a Flickr Page. Ben Muna used only the YouTube platform. The rest of the 19 candidates could not be studied because they did not effectively use any of the social media tools. It was discovered that some of the candidates like Ayah Paul and Garga Haman Adji had little presence on Facebook but they did not make it public and so it became difficult to study their social

media contributions given that their Facebook pages were used by their friends only. The other seventeen opposition candidates did not have social media accounts.

### **Implications for Future Research**

Social media is relatively new and its impact for democracy is gradually gaining roots in sub-Saharan Africa. Since its impact was felt greatly in the Tunisia, Egypt and Lybia's political uprising, it is just a matter of time that it will slowly be felt in the rest of Africa. Like many other new technologies and their role in changing human lives, social media is here to stay and gradually most other emerging democracies in Africa will exploit its usefulness.

Another promising future for social media in Africa can be seen through the spread of broadband technology in most of Africa today. Gone are the days when connectivity and access used to constitute a serious impediment for telecommunication in Africa. Wireless technology is filling the gap. Africa is growing steadily with respect to mobile phones ownership. With mobile phones ownership comes the use of social media ( Facebook, YouTube, LinkedIn, Flickr, Pinterest, Skype) and for politicians to reach the electorate this maybe the only medium at their disposal. The road, rail and air difficult transport systems in Africa make it sometimes impossible for political candidates to campaign, organized rallies, transport ballot boxes and declare election results in a timely manner. Social media technology is the solution for now.

Future research will examine whether traditional media still constitute a force to reckon with when it comes to political elections in Cameroon and Africa as a whole. As shown in this study, President Paul Biya, the incumbent Head of State in Cameroon had a tremendous influence on the state media to run his campaign. At the same time he utilized social media platforms. This is in recognition of the fact that the role of social media cannot be under estimated. As a result he won the election. The opposition candidates could not have the same influence as he had with traditional media and so decided to use social media and as already mentioned, Kah Walla got 11% of the vote mainly due to the fact she was well known by the social media users. This was her first ever presidential campaign and compared to the other candidates, she had very little political history in Cameroon. But her skillful use of blogs, Facebook,

YouTube and other platforms brought her to lamp light added to her little grassroots campaign strategy. This shows that there is a future for social media. But the power of the traditional media (radio, television and newspaper) with respect to those who are unable to use social media cannot be undervalued. Also, given that the rural sectors of Africa are getting access to mobile phones, it would seem that the days of traditional media influence are numbered and the incumbent dictators in Africa may not longer rely on their power as President Paul Biya did with the 2011 presidential election.

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