

Nigerian Electorates' Perception of Political Advertising and Election Campaign

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ABSTRACT Political advertising has in recent time become popular in Nigeria. This is in contrast to the past when political strategies such as political rallies, speeches and personal contacts were used. This paper examines the effectiveness of political advertising on Nigerian electorates and problems associated with negative political advertising. The research was conducted through the administration of 1650 questionnaires to respondents in Ekiti State, Nigeria; out of which 1500 were completed and returned. Chi-square, Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and Descriptive Exploratory Statistics were used. Chi-square was used to determine the difference in the mean age distribution of the electorates. ANOVA was used to determine the level of effectiveness of political advertising on Nigerian electorates while Descriptive Exploratory Analysis was conducted to examine the political behaviour and level of participation of the Nigerian Electorates in Politics. Results indicated that political advertising has significant effect on the electorates; the mean age distribution of electorates is not uniform and most participate in community development and other civic responsibilities. The study concludes that though political advertising is interesting, negative advertising should be totally discouraged.

INTRODUCTION

Elections in to any political office are always characterized with numerous activities, starting from the intra-party to inter-party level. There are various political strategies that contestants employ to emerge as their party's candidate, before ultimately contesting against candidates from other parties in a general election. These political strategies include lobbying, personal contacts, political rallies and campaign. However, these strategies have now become less effective for mobilizing support and woo voters for election (Opeibi 2006). The objectives of this paper, therefore, are to examine the effectiveness of political advertising on Nigerian electorates and also consider problems associated with negative political advertising.

Political parties in Nigeria are either Cadre or Elite Parties. According to Omodia (2009), elites could be political, bureaucratic, religious, military and traditional. These elites are not

mutually exclusive and can fall within more than a classification. For example a military ruler could be political elite during military regime and after retirement become a traditional ruler thus becoming traditional elite (Omodia 2009).

The issue of election has become very important in political discourse because it constitutes the fulcrum upon which rest the survival of democracy. The present democratic dispensations have shown that the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), the electoral body responsible for the conduct of elections in Nigeria has not lived up to expectations in terms of poor planning, excluding electorates from voting, inadequate supply of voting materials and late arrival of electoral officers to polling station (Abdullahi 2008; Omodia 2009). All these put in to question the issue of free and fair elections in Nigeria.

Literature Review

Kotler and Levy (1969) introduced the concept of Marketing into the analysis of election campaign. Kotler developed "exchange theory" in politics. According to Apospori et al. (2010), political parties and candidates exchange promises for votes and through a communication process with voters seek information from them to use in their political strategies. There is New-

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man's "broadening" thesis, which makes the concept of marketing to be broadened in order to be employed in the political arena (Newman 1999; Apospori et al. 2010). It was observed that with the use of new technologies there was a shift from "party concept" to "marketing concept". This according to Apospori et al. (2010) underlines a characteristic difference between the most recent and older electoral contests. There are certain concepts that need to be examined in relation to this study and are discussed as follows:

Electorate – The American Heritage Dictionary of the English (2000) defined it as a body of all qualified voters. Word Net 2.0 English Dictionary (2003) described it as the body of enfranchised citizens, that is, those qualified to vote. In a similar word, The Free Merriam – Webster Dictionary described it as a body of people entitled to vote. The various definitions suggest, therefore, that electorates are eligible voters or people who are qualified to vote for a political party or candidate of their choice.

Political Advertising – This is the use of media by political candidates to increase their exposure to the public (Robbs 2009). The extensive use of television and radio has supplanted direct appearances on the campaign trail which was popularly used by politicians in the past five decades. Spot advert is the most commonly used technique and it attempts to create a favourable image of the candidate and a negative image of the opponent. It links the candidate with desirable groups in the community and communicate the candidate's stand on selected issues (Robbs 2009). There are three major categories of political advertising:

- *Political Adverts* – It gives only statements about the candidate and no explicit mention of the candidate's opponent.
- *Contrast Adverts* – This contains both positive statement about the candidate and negative statement about the opponent.
- *Negative or Attack Adverts* – It contains only negative statements about the opponent and nothing positive about the candidate (Goldstein and Freedman 2002; Lau and Sigelman 2000; Opeibi 2006).

Johnston and Kaid (2002) classified political advertising in to two groups:

- (i) *Image Adverts* – This is intended to humanize candidate for the voters, and

- (ii) *Issue Advert* – This shows where candidate stands in specific key issues.

Theory of Political Advertising

According to Iyengar and Prior (1999), the assimilation hypothesis derived from social judgment theory suggests that exposure to political advertising campaigns encourages people to "assimilate" or equate their feelings about related attitude targets. The essence of this concept according to them is that negative reactions to political advertising will color attitudes towards other forms of adverts. They further argued that the competing possibility termed the "contrast" hypothesis, suggests that the negative response to political campaigns actually makes commercial advert appear more appealing than it would have been in the absence of political adverts. The conclusion to this argument, therefore, is that commercial advertising is evaluated more favourably than political advertising. They attempt to distinguish political advertising from commercial advertising by identifying the following:

- Political advertisers frequently engaged in "comparative" advertising in which the opposing candidates program and performance are criticized and even ridiculed. There is no comparable data for any commercial advert campaign; the "comparative" element is unlikely to be so prominent.
- Political advertisers do not adhere to any codes or procedures intended to protect the public from the in accurate and unsubstantiated claims but commercial advertisers voluntarily subscribe to a "code of advertising ethics"
- Political advertisers seek vote at any cost, even including a degraded sense of public regard for the candidates and the electoral process. Discouraging people from voting seems to be more feasible in political adverts than persuading supporters of one candidate to vote for the opponent. However, positivity is the currency of product advert.

Political Campaign – Gingsberg (2009) defined political campaign as organized efforts by a political party or candidate for public office to attract the support of voters in an election. He further said political campaign include five basic elements: professional public rela-

tions, polling, broadcast media, direct mail and the internet. The above definition clearly shows that Political advertising is just an element of Political Campaign. We briefly describe these elements as follows:

Professional Public Relations – They specialized in politics, conduct opinion polls, produce television commercials, organize direct mail campaign and develop advertising messages candidate will use to mobilize support.

Polling – This is the survey of voter's opinion. Political consultants use this information to run campaigns. It resembles business efforts to market products.

Broadcast Media – This include TV spot adverts, infomercial, televised debate, talk show interview (TV and Radio), the electronic town hall meeting and the World Wide web sites.

Direct Mail – This is used to raise funds for the party and candidates. It communicates to voters.

The Internet – This is the use of websites to provide candidates' biographical data, candidates' positions on major issues, endorsements from prominent supporters and other campaign materials.

Political Advertising and Campaign in Nigeria

The past two decades have witnessed the increase use of political advertising in Nigeria. Prior to this period, political rallies, personal contact and speeches have been popularly used for mobilizing electorates' support for elections (Chiang and Park 1998; Beard 2000; Opeibi 2004). This probably might be as a result of development in information technology and the realization of the potent force of media communication in packaging not only products but ideas. However, in Nigeria smear campaigns against political opponents started a long time ago. This is most especially by the dominant political party against opposition parties. Electoral campaigns are marketing actions employed to get votes in election. It enables parties and their candidates know how to allocate their resources and develop better knowledge about how and why voters make their choices (Apospori et al. 2010). However, most of these political adverts and campaign are negative advertising. According to Opeibi (2004), the use of negative adverts are due to several reasons amongst which include: fear of losing

election, paucity of ideas and probably to settle old scores between perceived political "enemies".

For example, during the Second Republic, in Kwara State the dominant party, National Party of Nigeria (NPN) in trying to tell the opposition that their candidate is popular sang this song: *Saraki mi gboro titi, o mi gboro. Oloye mi gboro titi, o mi gboro.*

This means Saraki (NPN financier and strong man) is shaking the city, he is shaking the city. The chief is shaking the city, he is shaking the city. The opposition party, The Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN), counter with this song:

Ile won na nu ni (x2ce). Ile abere wo bi ile ekute , Ile won na nu ni.

This song literally means: This is their house (x2ce). Their house like the rat's house (You have to bend down to enter). This is their house. This song was trying to discredit the National Party of Nigeria's members as poor not only of material well-being but of ideas. In 2003, the supporters of All Nigerian People's Party (ANPP) in trying to defy the opposition party leaders coined this party slogan: Up Lawal! No Shaking! Second term! Continuity forever!!!!

The People's Democratic Party (the opposition Party) replied with this Slogan:

Poku Lawal (Poku Lawal is an adulterated form of Up Lawal). *Bukola for Governor.*

This means unimportant Lawal. Bukola for Governor.

The political advert wars in the media were also popular in the Fourth Republic. Examples of these political advertising wars are in the Appendix 1. In Lagos State, we have the political advert war between Alliance for Democracy (AD) and the Progressive Action Congress (PAC). Alliance for Democracy informed the electorates that the opposition party, the Progressive Alliance Congress, wants to finish Lagos and the electorate should not "agree". The Progressive Alliance Congress replied with "Let's do what?" and urged the electorates to vote for their party and candidates. There was a similar scenario in Kwara State between All Nigerian's People Party (ANPP) and the opposition party, People's Democratic Party (PDP). The Advert for All Nigerian People's Party urged the electorate not to "serve the son" because they have "served the father". The People's Democratic Party gave its own bombshell by reminding the electorates of fai-

led promised by the All Nigerian People's Party. One important thing about political advertising is that it is interesting and sometimes offers the electorates reliable information about the candidates. Nigerian electorates are now being exposed more to political adverts than ever before and this has consequently made them to be conscious about the kind of political decisions they would want to make in the choice of their candidates for elective post.

METHODOLOGY

The research method used for this study was basically survey research. This was done a week before the 25th April, 2009 the date scheduled for the re-run election, through the use of questionnaire instrument in ten out of the sixteen councils in Ekiti State of Nigeria. The re-run elections were ordered in 63 out of 177 wards in Ekiti State. Three days were used for the distribution and collections of the questionnaires. This research was scheduled for this period in order to make the results of the study more reliable and realistic than situation where no election holds. The respondents were made to understand that the research has nothing to do with the outcome of the elections that was scheduled to hold but was purely an academic exercise. We had 1650 questionnaires distributed but only 1500 were returned.

Chi-square Static, Analysis of Variances (ANOVA), and Exploratory Descriptive Statistic were used in analyzing the data. Chi-square was used to determine the nature of distribution for all the observed values of the ages of the respondents, ANOVA was used to examine the effectiveness of political advertising on electorates while Exploratory Descriptive Statistic was further used to examine the political behaviour and level of participation of the Nigerian electorates. The questions in the research instrument were structured and close ended. Two categories of Likert scales were used – Scale: 1=Never, 5=Always often for measuring level of participation in politics and Scale: 1=Strongly disagree, 5=Strongly Agree for measuring electorates' feeling about political advertising.

RESULTS

The results from our analysis indicate that 604 respondents (40.3%) were males while 896

respondents (59.7%) were females. In this survey, 120 respondents fall within less than 20 years old, 1320 respondents were in 21 – 60 years old age bracket while those that were above 60 years old were 60 respondents. It was also revealed that out of the total respondents under survey, 840 were Christians, 420 were Moslems, 180 were traditionalists and 60 belonged to other categories. In terms of political behaviour, 540 respondents vote on the basis of candidate's personality, followed by 420 respondents who vote on the basis of their support for political party. Majority of respondents got information for voting from political campaign and believe that politicians are better than the military. In terms of level of participation, most of the respondents under survey very often communicate with politicians at the Local Government level, they don't interact with these politicians concerning matters affecting their community development and other civic responsibilities.

The electorates' feeling about political advertising shows that most of the respondents were of the opinion that political advertising is interesting, effective and negative advertising should be discouraged.

Test of Hypotheses

From the literature review, it is obvious that Political advertising and election campaigns are related to each other or more less the same, based on this we, therefore, proposed the following hypotheses for the study:

Hypothesis 1: Political advertising is having significant effects on the electorates.

Hypothesis 2: The proportions of all observed ages of the electorate are equal.

DISCUSSION

The sampling method used in this study indicated that a total of 150 questionnaires were returned, therefore, the response rate was 90.9% which gives fair representation of the sample used for this study. In the study, we have more female respondents than male respondents; this probably confirms the belief that females are more politically active than their male counterparts. This being the case even when there is election in Nigeria. There were few respondents (4%) falling within the above 60 years old age

bracket, this may probably be due to the fact that most elderly people tends to indicate little or no interest in politics. The greater proportion (96%) of the respondents fall within 60 years and below, this is in alignment with the fact that most people in this age bracket tend to be more politically conscious and active. We observed from the study that only 40% of the respondents had secondary and primary certificate. This result indicates that a larger proportion of the respondents are highly educated and hence would be able to develop high level of political awareness and consciousness. The Christians formed the greatest proportion of the respondents surveyed. This may be due to the fact that Ekiti State where the research was conducted is prominently Christian dominated compared to the northern part of the country where the Moslems dominate. It was observed that about 4% of the respondents claimed to belong to other religions different from the three prominent religions in Nigeria. This group may be those who are atheists or the free thinkers, who lay no claim to any religion.

On the issue relating to criteria for voting, four criteria were considered but personality scored the highest proportion (36%), this is followed by those respondents that would want to vote on the basis of party affiliation. These factors play significant role in the voting behaviour of the electorates in Ekiti State, Nigeria. The outcome of the re-run election further proved this. The election was keenly contested by two dominant parties, the Action Congress (AC) and the People's Democratic Party (PDP). In that election, some electorates voted based on personality of the contestants while some voted on the basis of party affiliation. This probably accounted for why the election was keenly contested leading to the emergence of PDP winning over AC with few votes.

The study also reveals that most of the respondents got the information they need for voting from political campaigns and speeches (44%), especially those who are party loyalist and some electorates who are undecided but are looking for information that would enable them make rightful political choice. A greater number of respondents are of the opinion that the politicians are better than military (41%) while few were of the opinion that they are honest (16.2%). The main reason why fewer people believed that they were honest may be due probably to failed promises and lack of

commitment to most of their campaign promises after their election into the office. In considering the respondent's level of participation in politics, it was revealed that most communicate with politicians at the local government level (72%) and are actively involved in community development and other civic responsibilities (64%). However, surprisingly, most did not do this concerning matters affecting their community (32%) and only fewer proportions did attend Party meetings (36%). The reason for the little interaction concerning community matters may be due to the attitude of these politicians, of not making themselves available to the people most especially after elections. The only time they recognize the electorates is during the election period when they need their votes. In respect to attendance of party meetings, most of the respondents surveyed were either students or career officers in their respective place of works and therefore would not have time attending party meetings regularly. There is a substantial proportion of the respondents that are of the opinion that political advertising is not believable and reliable (52%) while significant proportion believed that political advertising is interesting (88%) and effective on the electorates (64%) and negative advertising should be discouraged (52%). The main reason for the respondents concluding that political advertising is not believable and reliable may be due to the fact that most of the information used by the contestants sometime is false and deliberately intended to run down the opposition candidates. The respondents believed that political advertising is interesting in terms of music, language and use of words in those messages that are being communicated to the electorates. They agreed that negative advertising should be discouraged because of the problems that accompany its usage like violence, chaos, arson, murder and disruption of public order.

The Test of Hypothesis H_1 with ANOVA

The test of hypothesis H_1 on the 1500 questionnaires was carried out with a statistical tool named Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). Table 1 shows that using Post Hoc Tests (Equal variance not assumed), there is significant difference at 99% Confidence level, with degree of freedom equals to 5 and 1494 for between and within groups respectively. Hence, we accept

Table 1: ANOVA – One way: Effectiveness of political advertising on the electorates

	Sum of squares	Degree of freedom	Mean square	F	Sig
Between groups	298.186	5	59.637	80.398	0.000
Within groups	1108.214	1494	0.742		
Total	1406.400	1499			

Source: Computer Print out

the null hypothesis that political advertising is having significant effect on the electorates and we reject the alternative hypothesis that there is no significant difference. In most studies, Post Hoc Tests and not Test of Homogeneity of Variance are always recommended because in reality we don't normally have equal variance. However, though the test have shown that political advertising is having effect on electorates, this is only true for the "undecided" electorates but in reality this may not be true because no amount of political advertising may convince some party loyalist to vote for opposition party.

The Test of Hypothesis H_2 with Chi-square

For hypothesis H_2 Chi-square statistics was used to determine whether the proportions of all observed values of the ages of all respondents surveyed are equal (Table 2). Estimated Chi-square is significant at the 99 percent confidence level.

This indicates that there is no uniform age distribution for the respondents considered for the study. In the study there were greater proportion of respondents falling between 21 – 60 years (88%) while those in the other age brackets are only 12 percent which is a very smaller proportion compared with the larger proportion. This variation may be due to the fact that most of the respondents falling in the category of under 20 years are not up to the voting age of 18 years old and hence are not actively involved in politics while those above 60 years due to apathy show less interest in political matters.

CONCLUSION

Political advertising no doubt serves as a good communication medium through which a

Table 2: Chi-Square: Difference in the mean age distribution of the electorates

	Age		
	Observed N	Expected N	Residual
Less than 20 years	120	250	-130
21 – 30 years	480	250	230
31 – 40 years	420	250	170
41 – 50 years	240	250	-10
51 – 60 years	180	250	-70
Above 60 years	60	250	-190
Total	1500		

Test Statistics

	Age
Chi-square	559.200
df	5
Asymp	0.000

Source: Computer Print out

candidate attempts to market himself to the electorates in order to get their votes for election. Political advertising is interesting but ne-gative advertising should be discouraged.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This research extensively discussed about cogent issues and problems relating to the subject matter and based on the findings arrived at, the following suggestions were recommended:

- There is need for elections to be free and fair for them to produce a credible leadership.
- Political advertising and campaigns should be devoid of negative statements that can smear or destroy the reputation of contestants. In other word, messages from political advertising should be constructive rather than destructive.
- Electorates should be politically active so as to be able to religiously exercise their suffrage rights in any public election.
- Finally, electorates should not rely on political advertising as the only source through which they can obtain information about contestants. They should explore other sources like friends, family, party members and business associates for information that could help them in making their voting decisions.

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APPENDIX (1)

AD POLITICAL ADVERT

Baba PACKer!
Dem wan Finish di PACKing
(of Lagos) Wey dem begin
Since 1967 Haba! We no go gree!
Vote TINUBU/PEDRO 2003
Let's Vote AD again.

PAC COUNTER ADVERT

LET'S DO WHAT AGAIN?
LET'S NOT DO IT AGAIN **LET'S VOTE FOR CHANGE**
LET'S VOTE FOR PROGRESS **AFENIFERE LAGOS STATE**
VOTE PROGRESSIVE ACTION CONGRESS
GANIYU DAWODU FOR GOVERNOR

ANPP POLITICAL ADVERT

You've Served	The father.
Why serve	The son?
Kwara must be totally free	Up Kwara. Vote Lawal.

PDP COUNTER ADVERT

Four
Years ago
He promised Kwara People
Light Agriculture Water Accountability Lovely Hospitals
Today everybody knows the truth.....

Source: Excerpts from Punch Newspaper (Nigerian National Daily Newspaper) – March 16, 18, April 4 and 9, 2003.