

Nigerian Journal *of* POLITICAL SCIENCE

ISSN: 6331-8524

Volume 17, No. 1

January - June 2017



Published by
Department of Political Science and
International Studies
Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, Nigeria

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ISSN: 6331 – 8524

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Ahmadu Bello University Press Limited, Zaria,
Kaduna State- Nigeria.
Tel.: 08065949711.
E-mail: abupresslimited2005@yahoo.co.uk
WEBSITE: www.abupress.org

NOTE FROM THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

The Nigerian Journal of Political Science has returned after a brief hiatus due to the imperative of reorganization. The Editorial Board was constituted in order to ensure unbroken production of the Journal twice a year.

There are fourteen articles in this volume 17, No.1, that cover democratic participation and election, security and conflict management, policy making, economic issues, language politics, human trafficking and international politics of climate change.

The articles are products of painstaking researches and intellectual exposition.

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The *Nigerian Journal of Political Science* (NJPS) is published twice a year by the Department of Political Science & International Studies Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. As a Social Science multi-disciplinary journal, we welcome articles from contributors in the social sciences and humanities.

Two hard copies of the manuscripts, together with a soft copy (in Microsoft word) should be sent to the Editor in Chief through E-mail: njops@abui.edu.ng. We acknowledge the receipt of articles which will be assessed by scholars in the discipline. Articles should be original and not more than 8,000 words or 20 pages, typed double spaced on one side of A4 size paper.

The manuscript should contain: title page with name(s) of the Author(s) and affiliation(s), an abstract, (maximum of 250 words), main text, tables and figures, notes and references in that order. A processing fee of five thousand naira (N5,000.00 or ₦ 5000) should be sent together with the article. Authors would be required to pay publication fees if their articles are adjudged publishable.

The APA (Latest) style of referencing is preferred. Manuscripts that are likely to require undue editorial attention due to poor language or presentation will not be considered.

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AN ASSESSMENT OF POLITICAL MARKETING STRATEGIES AND ELECTORAL PROCESSES IN THE 2015 GUBERNATORIAL ELECTION IN OYO STATE, NIGERIA

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.21325999>

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Abstract

This study assessed the relevance of political marketing strategies in the electoral processes through the 2015 gubernatorial election in Oyo State, Nigeria. The study attempted to paint a picture of the essence of marketing methods in politics, while some background information were provided on the five (5) political heavy weights that jostled for the governorship position in Oyo State in the year 2015. The three-stage model for political marketing was adopted as the underpinning theory for the study, while a historical discourse on the gubernatorial election in the 'Pacesetters State' was also made explicit. The study revealed that such political strategies as developing a narrative, social media marketing, negative campaigning, direct mail marketing, as well as media and public relations were conceptualized as tactics adopted by political parties and their gubernatorial candidates in the build up to the 2015 gubernatorial election in Oyo State. The study concluded that bridging the gap between marketing and politics requires a deep knowledge of political systems and marketing savvy. It was recommended that the political marketing strategies and electioneering campaign tactics should be allowed to impact positively on the Nigerian electoral system. It is the belief of the researcher that such impact would go a long way to deepen the Nigerian democratic governance and as well ensure successful conduct of future elections in the country.

Key words: *Electioneering campaign, Electoral processes, Gubernatorial election, Political advertising, Political campaign, Political marketing strategies.*

Introduction

Political campaigns are inherent components of democratic practices in many countries across the globe (Savigny, 2009). However, free and fair election constitutes a foundation of democracy in both developed and developing countries. It is against this backdrop that Less-Marshment (2014) refers to political marketing as a fundamental part of political life. Presidential and gubernatorial candidates, politicians and political parties, government ministries and local government councils all use marketing strategies in their pursuit of political goals. Political campaigns, according to Kotler & Armstrong (2006), have increasingly been compared to marketing campaigns in which the electoral candidates put themselves on the voters' market and use modern marketing techniques, particularly marketing research and commercial advertising, to maximize voter 'purchase'. The marketing analogy is more than coincidental. It is argued that the very essence of an electoral candidate's interface with the electorate is a marketing one, not only in recent times but far back into the past (Kotler, 1975). Candidates seeking to win elections cannot avoid marketing themselves. The only question is how to do it effectively and responsibly.

Several previous scholarly works have also noted the marketing character of political elections in some countries' democratic systems (Kelly, 1956; Glick, 1967; Nimmo, 1970; Wring, 1996; Lees-Marshment, 2001; Moloney, 2004). Interest in the marketing aspects of elections has been stimulated to a large extent by the spectacular growth in political advertising and campaigning mechanism. There has also been a substantial growth of scientific opinion polling (i.e. marketing research), computer analysis of voting patterns (i.e. sales analysis), and professional campaign management agencies (i.e. marketing organizations). The subtleties of the marketing approach to political elections go beyond the rising expenditure levels and the use of certain information and planning approaches (Kotler, 1975; Kotler and Keller, 2006). Market research is used, when deciding on the policies and service design, to understand what the electorates they seek votes from want and need; voter profiling helps create new segments to target; strategy guides creation of the political brand to develop an attractive vision; internal marketing guides the provision of volunteer involvement; analytics and experimental research test and refine communication messages; and delivery management sets expectations and helps convey progress once a politician is elected into a political office or a programme has begun (Osugwu, 2008; Moufahim & Lim, 2009; Less-Marshment, Conley & Cosgrove, 2014).

It would be a gross mistake to think that the election campaigns have taken on a marketing character only in recent years; campaigning has always had a marketing character. Prior to the new methodology, candidates sought political offices through the handshake, baby kissing, teas, and speech making (Kotler, 1975). However, these identified methods are still in use till today. The 'new methodology' is not the introduction of marketing methods into politics but rather an increased sophistication and acceleration of their uses (Less-Marshment, 2014). In the 2015 gubernatorial election in Oyo State of Nigeria, there were five (5) major political heavyweights that jostled for the number one position in Agodi Government House at Ibadan - the political capital of Oyo State. These electoral candidates comprise of Isiaka Abiola Ajimobi of All Progressives Congress (APC), Rashidi Adewolu Ladoja of the Accord Party (AP), Christopher Adebayo Alao-Akala of Labour Party (LP), Teslim Kolawole Folarin of Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), and Oluseyi Makinde of Social Democratic Party (SDP).

Three of these gubernatorial candidates for the 2015 governorship election in Oyo State had hitherto served as the Governor of the 'Pacesetters State' at one point or the other. Rashidi Adewolu Ladoja of the AP was the governor of the State between 2003 and 2007; Christopher Adebayo Alao-Akala of the LP was the State's governor between 2007 and 2011; while Isiaka Abiola Ajimobi of the APC was at the helm of affairs between 2011 and 2015. Meanwhile, Teslim Kolawole Folarin of the PDP was the senate leader at the Upper Legislative Chamber in the National Assembly of the Federal Republic of Nigeria between 2007 and 2011, while Oluseyi Makinde, an engineer, was a new comer in the political firmament of the Pacesetters State. Average political observers in the state referred to Makinde of the SDP as 'an underdog', considering his youthful outlook and his urbane posture.

Towards the 2015 governorship election in Oyo State, these gubernatorial candidates did not only develop sophisticated marketing strategies calculated to win the support of the electorates, but also of their respective political parties, opinion leaders and interest groups. Candidates who run for public office must market themselves to mass audience, sometimes the whole nation, to win an election (Hoegg & Lewis, 2011). The campaign manager for an electoral candidate is saddled with the responsibility of creating marketing and advertising plan to reach a mass audience of the electorate. "The government's policies are

like cornflakes - If they are not marketed, they will not sell" (Franklin, 2004). Political marketing has therefore become an invaluable component of the modern-day politics, most especially this contemporary regime of fairer trade in goods, services, ideas and commodities via globalization and deregulated market economy (Onigbinde, 2015). It is in this light that this study intends to evaluate the political marketing strategies that were deployed towards the 2015 gubernatorial election in Oyo State - A federating unit that is popularly referred to as 'the Pacesetters' in Nigeria.

Conceptual and Theoretical Review

As an area of academic research and teaching, political marketing is a modern and dynamic field that seeks to understand, learn from, comment on and even influence the electoral behaviour (Less-Marshment, 2014). Political marketing also attracts public attention and debate (Lilleker, 2007). There is no gainsaying that political marketing has become an invaluable part of the discipline of politics. The definition of political marketing, according to Scammell (1999), can be broken down into three distinct segments in its most basic form: 'communication, management, and political science'. Political marketing is about political organizations adapting business-marketing concepts and techniques to help them achieve their goals (Lees-Marshment, 2014). Political marketing has emerged in recent years as an important process for the political campaign. However, there is disagreement within the field about how political marketing should be approached, due to the numerous theories and models within the discipline (Lilleker & Less-Marshment, 2005). According to Savigny & Temple (2010), those managing political campaigns need to decide how to approach the campaign process by taking cognizance of the three fields which influence the discipline. Political marketing has hitherto suffered from significant confusion (Scammell, 1999) because it is commonly perceived to be simply about political communication, but it is a potentially fruitful marriage between political studies and marketing (Less-Marshment, 2009a).

Moreover, the various media entities play vital role in the distribution of the messages of the electoral candidates. According to Piechota (2011), the perceptions and understanding of politics for the general voting publics/electorates are largely derived through the filter of the media. For traditional companies, the role of the media is strictly distribution; the channel by

which the message is communicated, to whom, and how often, the media is paid for simply reproducing the messages provided by the advertiser. In the political arena, the media is transformed from a distribution technique to an active participant in the critique of potential candidates (Hoffner & Rehkoff, 2011). Meanwhile, the media, including public service broadcasters are political actors in their own right. They function to protect their own interests in addition to their theoretical role as defenders of democracy (Savigny, 2007). It is against this backdrop that Donovan (2012) stresses that the media do not, in any political system, confine themselves to a 'neutral transmission function'.

This study, however, adopts the three-stage model for political marketing as the underpinning theory. This theory happens to be the most common theory for political marketing and has been widely accepted and discussed in academic literature. According to Savigny & Temple (2010), this model for political marketing consists of three distinct steps for the electoral candidate to follow, providing a template to achieve a market orientation and eventual electoral success. The three stage model was propounded by Robert Keith in 1960 with his Three Stage Evolutionary Model, while the model was expanded via Dominic Wing's theoretical framework for political marketing in 1992, and further elaborated upon by Manser (1983), Less-Marshment (2001a), and O'Cass (2001).

The first step of the three-stage model is identifying consumer demand, apply applying the data to the product, and refining it accordingly. Step two consists of informing the consuming publics of the aforementioned changes. The final step is the delivery of a refined finished product which would satisfy consumer demands with the ultimate goal of changing voter's behaviour-net, that is, voting for the electoral candidate (Savigny & Temple, 2010).

Application of this model to the political situation translates into political parties and electoral candidates listening to their target audience for public opinion; thus providing the electorate with a 'product' that they want by projecting their campaign promises and electoral manifesto to suit what the electorate want, and eventually granting the candidate electoral victory (Manser, 1983, O'Cass, 1996, O'Cass, 2001, Sherman & Schuffman, 2002, Less-Marshment, 2009b).

However, it becomes imperative to note that the three stage model leaves out one crucial aspect of the communication chain between the electoral candidate and the

voting public, and vice versa: the biased and agenda-ridden media. According to Donovan (2012), the media, on several occasions, act as loose-cannon, an uncontrolled additional source of influence, even beyond the message the electoral candidates are trying to communicate in the process of electioneering campaign. This action needs to be taken into cognizance in any model that hopes to influence the electoral behaviour, most especially in a heterogeneous society like Nigeria. This limitation notwithstanding, the three-stage model still provides the basic framework for successful political marketing, especially in this contemporary dispensation of fairer trade in political activities.

Gubernatorial Elections in Oyo State: A Historical Discourse

Since the creation of Oyo State from the defunct Western State of Nigeria in 1976, no governor has been re-elected prior to the 2015 gubernatorial election. The first civilian governor, Chief James Ajibola Ige (SAN), was a colourful politician. He was elected on the platform of the defunct, Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN), led by the late Chief Jeremiah Obafemi Awolowo. Ige was a household name in the country before he became the governor of the Pacesetters State in 1979. The eminent lawyer was the National Publicity Secretary of the defunct Action Group (AG), former Commissioner for Agriculture and Natural Resources in the defunct Western State and a member of the Constitution Drafting Committee (CDC) set up by former Military Head of State, Gen. Olusegun Aremu Obasanjo, to make proposals for the 1979 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

In 1979, Ige assumed the reins after defeating First Republic Minister of Education – Chief Richard Osuolale Akinjide (SAN), the candidate of the defunct National Party of Nigeria (NPN). He was supported by prominent Ibadan UPN chieftains, including the late Venerable Emmanuel Alayande, the late Chief Busari Adelakun and the late Chief Lamidi Ariyibi Adedibu. However, ahead of the 1983 gubernatorial election in the State, the NPN, led by the late Chief Augustus Meredith Adisa Akinloye, was bent on capturing power in the State. Akinloye, a former member of the House of Representatives and minister, was warming up for the 1987 presidential election. According to Oladesu (2015), Akinloye wanted to deliver his home state, which is Oyo, in order to have a base for future presidential election.

In 1982, crisis broke out between the governor and Ibadan political leaders. Following the protracted rift, Adelakun and Adedibu defected to the NPN. When he defected, Adelakun, the man fondly referred to as 'the strongman of Ibadan politics', started calling for the enthronement of the son of the soil; that is, an Ibadan indigene, as the Executive Governor of the state. He also played the ethnic card, saying that Awolowo (Awo), from Ijebu-Remo, imposed Ige on Ibadan, which has the largest population. Oladesu (2015) quotes Adelakun as follows:

That was what Awolowo was doing. Under military rule, he nominated Bola Ige from Ijesa, Bisi Onabanjo from Ijebu, Ajayi from Ekiti as commissioners. He did not recommend any Ibadan man, not even our father, Alayande, who was always with him. Awo hates Ibadan.

Meanwhile, the NPN had set up a search team to look for a suitable gubernatorial candidate. They found a party sympathizer, Dr. Victor Omonololu Olunloyo, who contested the 1983 election and defeated Ige in controversial circumstances. Thus, despite his performance, Ige's bid for a second term as the executive governor of the old Oyo State crumbled. The masses protested the alleged rigging. The residences of some NPN chieftains were torched. Scores of the party stalwarts were injured. Ige challenged the outcome of the election up to the Supreme Court. But, the apex court, affirmed Olunloyo's victory.

However, Olunloyo's tenure as the Executive Governor of Oyo State was short lived. Despite being an NPN governor, many expected that he will perform, owing to his antecedent as a cerebral scholar, mathematician, former university don and commissioner. He set up a good cabinet. But, barely three months in office, he was sacked by the military junta headed by Maj.-Gen. Mohamadu Buhari and Brig.-Gen. Babatunde Idiagbon, following the coup d'état of December 31, 1983.

In the aborted Third Republic, the Social Democratic Party (SDP) gubernatorial candidate in the new Oyo State (that is, after the creation of Osun State from the old Oyo State), the late Chief Kolapo Olawuyi Ishola, defeated the candidate of the National Republican Convention (NRC), Alhaji Yekini Ayoade Adejo. He

did not even complete his term before the late Gen. Sani Abacha sacked the interim government headed by Chief Ernest Shogunle Shonekan.

In 1999, Alhaji Lamidi Onaolapo Adesina, a former teacher, secondary school principal, trade unionist and second Republic House of Representatives' member, was elected on the platform of the Alliance for Democracy (AD). He was captured as a 'prisoner of war' by the former military governor of Oyo State, Col. Ahmed Usman, during the onslaught against the members of Afenifere Renewal Group (ARG)/ National Democratic Coalition (NADECO) fighting for the revalidation of the annulled June 12, 1993 presidential election 'won' by the defunct Social Democratic Party (SDP) candidate, the late Chief Moshood Kasimawo Olawale Abiola. Adesina, an Awolowo's loyalist, defeated the People's Democratic Party (PDP) gubernatorial flag bearer, Alhaji Yekini Ayoade Adeojo. He also implemented the manifesto of the party (Oladesu, 2015).

However, crisis seized Afenifere/AD in the Southwest. Many party chieftains defected to the PDP, ahead of 2003 polls. Also, AD governors, with the exception of Senator Bola Ahmed Tinubu of Lagos State, played into the hands of former President Olusegun Arẹmu Obasanjo. According to Oladesu (2015), there was a pact between Obasanjo and the governors to campaign for his second term as the president of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, with the assurance that he will also protect their interest at the governorship election. In fact, Adesina and his Ogun State counterpart, Chief Olusegun Osoba, became Obasanjo's campaign managers. During the gubernatorial election in 2003, a political earthquake swept across the Southwest. Adesina was defeated by the PDP gubernatorial candidate, Senator Rashidi Adewolu Ladoja.

Ladoja, an engineer and Third Republic senator also could not win the second term battle as the Governor of Oyo State. According to Oladesu (2015), Ladoja was principally installed with the support of a self-acclaimed strongman of Ibadan politics, Chief Lamidi Ariyibi Adedibu. The old man openly asked for a portion of the state treasury. His request was turned down by the Governor. Crisis broke out between the godfather and his political son. An impeachment was concocted. Ladoja was shoved aside in a controversial manner. He was impeached by the House of Assembly members loyal to Adedibu. For eleven (11) calendar months, Ladoja's deputy, Chief Christopher Adebayo Alao-Akala, was made the governor

of the Pacesetters State. But, following the verdict of the court, Ladoja was reinstated and his deputy was reverted to his former position.

Despite the reinstatement, the war between Ladoja and Adedibu intensified. During the build up towards the PDP governorship primaries in Oyo State in 2006/2007, Adedibu insisted that Alao Akala should be the ruling PDP standard bearer in the 2007 gubernatorial election in the State. At the PDP zonal rally for Southwest geo-political zone that was held in Akure – the capital of Ondo State in 2007, the party flag was given to Alao-Akala, to the consternation of Ladoja, who had hoped that good reason would prevail on the party leadership at the last minute and the party would consider him for a second term. On that note, his ambition to serve for a second term as the Governor of Oyo State hit the rock.

In 2007 gubernatorial election in the Pacesetters State, Alao-Akala, the standard bearer of the PDP defeated Senator Isiaka Abiola Ajimobi, who contested on the platform of the defunct All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP). Alao-Akala, a former Executive Chairman of Ogbomoso North Local Government Council, was the Executive Governor of Oyo State between 2007 and 2011. He had the support of Adedibu. But, the kingpin, who was his political backbone, died before the poll. The vacuum created by his demise could not be filled.

In 2011 gubernatorial election in Oyo State, Alao-Akala relied on the power of incumbency, his performance in office as the governor between 2007 and 2011, the overwhelming support from the people of Ogbomoso zone and a section of Oke-Ogun zone. But, he was narrowly defeated by Senator Isiaka Abiola Ajimobi, who got the supports of prominent Ibadan elites and all the first class monarchs in the state, under the political firmament of the defunct Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN).

Political Marketing Strategies and the 2015 Gubernatorial Election in Oyo State

There is no gain saying the fact that the electorate cast their votes based on policy that electoral candidate puts forward before an election. The votes placed by generality of electorate are shaped by carefully targeted and highly optimized political marketing campaigns. However, in the course of the year 2015 gubernatorial electioneering campaign in Oyo State, the following political

strategies were adopted and used by a number of political parties, pressure groups and their respective gubernatorial candidates.

▪ **Developing a Narrative**

The most important aspect of any political campaign is the narrative (Kaid, Postelnicu, Landreville, Yun & LeGrange, 2007). The narrative is the story behind a candidate- their history, their beliefs, their personality and all of the traits and characteristics that make them worth voting for. In the process of electioneering campaign in the 2015 gubernatorial election in Oyo state, five narratives competed against one another in the public arena. Rashidi Ladoja's narrative was that of a former governor who used to pay wages and salaries as and when due; and made welfare of the state's employees uppermost in his heart while he was the chief executive of the state. Adebayo Alao-Akala's narrative, on the other hand, was that of a former governor whose approach and focus on wealth creation and people's empowerment would transform the political economy in the state. Abiola Ajimobi's narrative, of course, was that of a political insider whose focus and target on infrastructural development would endear the state to both local and foreign investors. Teslim Folarin's narrative was that of an ex-senate leader whose experience in the National Assembly could bring greater benefits to the state. Seyi Makinde's narrative, however, was that of a political outsider whose fresh idea and focus on creating real change would transform politics in the State. Each of the candidates' narratives shaped every other aspect of their political marketing.

According to Less-Marshment (2001b) and Robinson (2010), crafting a narrative that a political candidate's voter base can relate to is one of the most important elements of running a political marketing campaign. A good narrative needs to be believable and relevant to the audience whose support is being campaigned for. However, creating a narrative is a branding strategy not unlike the tactics used by marketing companies. Instead of a product or company becoming a brand, a party or a political candidate becomes a marketable brand that people can relate to (Lock & Harris, 1996).

▪ **Social Media Marketing**

Social media is one of the most effective platforms for raising awareness of political issues, encouraging people to vote, and promoting political candidates. According to Leppaniemi, Karjalainen, Lehto & Goman (2010), since social media

is primarily used by young people; it is a great platform for energizing a voter demographic that is typically uninterested in mainstream politics. Political marketers use a variety of strategies to connect with potential voters using social media (Kushin& Yamamoto, 2010). These techniques range from honest and direct- such as operating an independent Facebook page- to misleading, dishonest and manipulative. In the build up towards the 2015 gubernatorial election in Oyo State, virtually all the political candidates were made visible on a number of social media platforms via the political marketing activities of their respective teeming political associates and supporters.

One of the most effective ways to generate support for a particular electoral candidate using social media is to build a Facebook page for the party or candidate (Hoffner&Rehkoff, 2011). This allows a political marketer to reach thousands or millions of political voters using, updates, messages and event invitations. Meanwhile, a Facebook page allows one to connect with people that are already interested in one's party or candidate, however, it does not allow one to expand his/her base easily. One of the best ways to attract new supporters is through the use of viral memes and videos.

Facebook and Twitter users love to share funny images, videos and other content that relates to hot political issues (Leppaniemiet *al.*, 2010). By creating viral videos and pictures, one can raise awareness of one's candidate or a hot political issue organically.

▪ Negative Campaigning

Winning an election requires a candidate getting more votes than his/her closest competitor(s). There are two ways to achieve this: bring attention to the good things one's candidate will do; and bring attention to the bad things their competitor(s) will do (Meirick& Nisbett,2011). Negative campaigning is a form of political marketing strategy that focuses on convincing voters not to vote for someone candidate's competitor(s). The most well-known form of negative campaigning is the attack advertisement. (Dardis, Shen & Edwards,2008). According to Dardis *et al.* (2008), attack advertisement focuses on a candidate's competitor(s) record of dodgy dealings, their questionable history or their political failures.

In the build up towards the 2015 gubernatorial election in Oyo State, it was observed that most political parties and their gubernatorial candidates engaged in

one form of negative campaigning or the other via television adverts, newspaper columns, political debates and direct marketing among others. Meanwhile, negative campaigning might seem dirty and unsportsmanlike; nevertheless, it has a wide range of benefits (Gelb & Bush, 2011). Since negative campaign is targeted towards those likely to vote for a candidate's competitor(s), it can sway these voters into changing their minds and shifting over to a particular candidate's side. Although it can be incredibly effective when done right, negative marketing however can be ineffective without the positive marketing campaign to support it (Dardiset *al*, 2008).

▪ **Direct Mail Marketing**

Although social media and television are the most popular platforms for connecting with the younger generation of voters (Leppaniemi *et al.*, 2010; Campbell, 2010). However there is no gainsaying that many people still respond very well to old-fashioned direct mail marketing. In the build up towards the 2015 gubernatorial election in Oyo State, most political parties, pressure groups, electoral candidates and their campaign managers engaged in the distribution of brochures, leaflets, short form manifestos and other direct mail documents to the electorate in both urban and rural communities in the state. This act of distribution is in congruence with the research suggestion of Ben-Ur & Newman (2010) that direct mail marketing documents still remain excellent tools for persuading people in a particular geographical area to vote for a certain electoral candidate, political party or government policy.

Since direct mail is geographically targeted, it is an extremely powerful marketing strategy for energizing a voter base prior to a general election (Franz & Ridout, 2010). With the right quantity of leaflets, yard signs and public rallies; towns and villages can swing election results and give one's party or candidate a significant advantage. However, like all other forms of political marketing strategies, direct mail marketing needs to reinforce the narrative created around a political party, government policy or electoral candidate. It needs to focus on voters' benefits, political party's strategies for improving the community and the advantages that an electoral candidate and his party can offer over their competitor(s) (Wring 2005).

▪ **Media and Public Relations**

There is no gainsaying that political marketing has become dominated by

marketing management theories, which lay important groundwork for political candidates in the electoral process. The academic literature, however, would be leaving out a very fundamental aspect of political marketing, by not taking cognizance of the active role of the media in the electioneering campaign. In essence, the media are effectively assumed to be pivotal tools at the disposal of politicians and their political parties (Donovan, 2012). However, this assumption negates the active role that the media themselves play in shaping the political message delivered to the electorate. The world of political marketing could be radically transformed, providing the electoral candidates a concrete plan to follow for electoral success. According to Savigny & Temple (2010), the 'inside job role' played by the political reporters and commentators in interpreting, changing, and challenging the messages of the political marketers is clearly vital in any marketing campaign. Public relations, on the other hand, play a vital role in selecting and framing mass media content that could influence public opinion and behaviour (Fortunato, 2000).

In the build up towards the 2015 gubernatorial election in Oyo State, both the political parties and their governorship candidates used traditional media platforms, such as radio and television, to attract massive audiences in all the geopolitical divisions of the state. However, the capacity to organize radio and television appearances for their electoral candidates is one of the most important tasks of any political marketer (Lee & Chang, 2011). Meanwhile, connecting with media insiders might seem difficult, but it is surprisingly easy once one starts thinking of media organizations as groups of individuals rather than monolithic entities. With the right pitch, the right person, and the right strategy, one can easily earn enough publicity for one's political party or candidate via media and public relations.

Electoral Processes and the 2015 General Elections in Nigeria

In the build up towards the 2015 general elections in Nigeria, the Electoral Act of 2010 was to be amended by the National Assembly in an attempt to legalize the use of Card Readers for authenticating the identity of voters in the elections. The proposed amended Act was also meant to empower the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to transmit election results through the electronic device from polling stations to the collation centre. According to Salaudeen (2017), the proposed legislation was meant to be a response to the long-standing

public clamour for an electoral system that would eliminate or reduce the disputations that usually occur after elections.

Since 1964, elections in Nigeria have been problematic; ballot boxes often develop wings and losers are declared winners by the electoral commission. When those boxes resurface at the counting centres, they are stuffed with multiple thump-printed ballot papers. Results declared at the polling centres are usually at variance with those submitted at the collation centre.

Nigeria's quest for electronic voting dates back to the Second Republic when the chairman of the defunct Federal Electoral Commission (FEDECO), the late Justice Victor Ovie-Whiskey, mooted the idea for the 1983 general elections. The plan was vehemently opposed by the late sage, Chief Obafemi Awolowo, the leader of the defunct Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN). He threatened to call out his supporters to smash the machines, because he had lost confidence in the electoral body to conduct a free and credible election.

Again in 2006, when the former INEC Chairman, Prof. Maurice Iwu, proposed electronic voting for the 2007 polls, it was greeted with criticism. The pan-Yoruba socio-political group, *Afenifere*, rejected the innovation, saying that the country was not ripe for it. The organization cited low literacy level and lack of time to ascertain its worth and workability. Besides, it alleged that Prof. Iwu had a hidden agenda. *Afenifere* described e-voting under the erstwhile INEC Chairman as an electronic rigging mechanism.

Meanwhile, there is no gainsaying that the fallout of the 2015 general elections was the use of the Smart Card Reader. However, there was a Supreme Court judgment that did not accept the use of the Card Reader as part of the process of accrediting the voter (Salaudeen, 2017). Therefore, the Smart Card Reader was not used in voting, but used as a means of accrediting a prospective voter. Moreover, there were some minor lapses with the Smart Card Reader during the 2015 general elections. One thing is certain: the Card Readers did not fail to read cards, what they failed to do was to tie the cards with the individuals through their biometrics. The Card Readers refused, in some instances, to connect the biometric fingerprints to the cards. So, there were many problems with Smart Card Readers during the 2015 general elections, not only in Oyo State but in other federating units in Nigeria.

Assessment and Conclusion

Bridging the gap between marketing and politics requires a deep knowledge of political systems and marketing competence to arrive at the goal. However, as the political office seekers endeavors to develop a marketing strategy calculated to win the support of voters, adequate cautions must be taken by the incumbent Nigerian politicians on the marketing of political goods. According to Akinraso (2016), political goods are the services, projects, and programmes, which modern nation-states are expected to provide for their citizens. They include security; laws, policies, rules, and regulations; schools and educational instruction; medical and health care; money and banking system; infrastructure (especially, power and water supply; road, rail, and air transport systems; and public buildings and spaces); environmental protection; and a forum for civil society.

Political goods are what Nigerians commonly refer to as the dividends of democracy. In advanced democracies, it is normal for politicians to compete vigorously during primaries in their attempt to convince the electorate that they have better policies and programmes than their competitor(s). In the United States, for example, campaign promises are social contracts that politicians struggle to implement. That is why, once elected, they often follow through on their campaign promises by routinely providing political goods for their citizens without fanfare. Sometimes, where necessary, they ask the citizens in a referendum, if they want changes to certain policies or the location of certain facilities before taking any action. This is especially true of policies, programmes, and projects that may affect the citizens' life chances or their incomes. In most cases, however, citizens often wake up only to find out that certain facilities have been provided, modified, or repaired, as appropriate.

Moreover, the introduction of Smart Card Readers into the electoral processes in the 2015 general elections should be considered a progressive development in the nation's political history considering the fact that the Nigerian experience with democracy has for long been marred by a fraudulent electoral system whereby ballot stuffing, snatching of ballot boxes, manipulation of results and compromise of electoral officials to falsify results had become the norm. As a result, people have lost confidence in Nigerian elections and the results they produce. E-voting system is therefore a timely recognition of the mass clamour for the conduct of efficient, reliable and fair elections as it gives little or no room for manipulation

during the voting; and its adoption would hence reform and clean up the electoral process.

In conclusion, political marketing varies from a classical approach to marketing, due to the differences between selling a product, and selling a person. Thus, the framework for understanding the necessary roles and actions of the electoral candidate(s) during the process of electioneering campaign was provided with presentation of the year 2015 gubernatorial election in Oyo State as a case study. It should be noted that exposure to negative political advertising can foster among individuals' feelings of alienation, distrust, and apathy towards government or the political process (Dardiset *al.*, 2008). However, attack adverts are prevalent in political campaigns, but their effectiveness is debatable, as opposed to positive messages highlighting the values an electoral candidate stands for. It becomes imperative to stress the role and value of social media toward the implementation of a well-rounded marketing mix in the process of political electioneering campaign. Meanwhile, implementing social media as a primary tool in a political electioneering campaign may further diminish the role of traditional media. Overall, it is possible to conclude that the basis of political marketing rests in forming emotional connections and lasting impressions on the voting public, which will eventually lead to greater electoral success. Moreover, the gains recorded with the use of Card Readers in the 2015 general elections goes a long way to show that with the adoption of e-voting, the country will record a huge success in democratic governance, while the crisis of confidence and lack of trust in Nigerian electoral system would be addressed.

Recommendations

From the assessment done and conclusion drawn from the conceptual analysis above, the following recommendations therefore become imperative.

- Political marketing strategies and electioneering campaign tactics should be allowed to impact positively on the Nigerian electoral systems. It is the belief of the researcher that such impact would go a long way to deepen the Nigerian democratic experience and as well ensure successful conduct of the future elections in the country.
- Many political candidates focus much of their energies, passion, and funds into creating attack advertisements about their opponent(s). Their efforts could rather be channeled much more efficiently into creating

advertisements which highlight their political records. There is no gaining that negative advertising is considerably less beneficial than positive messaging.

- Political candidates need to create confidence in themselves. They need to realize that consumers buy benefits; voters are buying confidence that their candidate will deliver what they want. That is why changing voter's behaviour rests with the positive message(s).
- Political candidates need to spend time meeting individuals and answering questions at town hall meetings during the process of electioneering campaign. This is a critical step in the election process, and can make the difference between winning an election, and a loss.
- Political candidates need to embark on social networking; they should channel as much effort and energy as possible into creating emotional connections with the voting public. It becomes imperative for them to realize that the basis of political marketing rests in forming emotional connections and lasting impressions on the voting public, which will eventually lead to greater electoral success.
- Finally, there must be a change in the attitude of the political class, to accept that election is not a do or die affair. If the intention is to serve, contestants should allow the voters to make free choice and let the peoples vote count. Bloodletting, and thuggery should be avoided.

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