

Marketing Communication Strategies and Voters Behaviour in Electioneering Process in Cross River State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The study investigated the relationship between marketing communication strategies and voters' behaviour in electioneering process, in Southern senatorial district of Cross River State, Nigeria. The purpose was to determine the effect and relationship of marketing communication strategies such as advertising, personal selling and relationship marketing in electioneering process. The survey research design was employed for the study. The sample for the study was 400 which was derived using the Taro Yamane's formula of from a total number of 971, 470 Population from four local government areas (Calabar municipal, Calabar south, Akpabuyo and Odukpani). The stratified and systematic sampling was then used to select 100 respondents from each of the four Local Government Areas, in the following Political parties All Progressive Congress (APC), Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), and Labour Party (LP).

Index terms— marketing communication strategies; advertising, personal selling, relationship marketing, voters' behaviour, and electioneering process

1 Introduction

lection is the hallmark of democracy and without the popular consent of the people the principles of democracy are not being practiced (Ebegbulem, 2010). This is the reason why political parties are at logger-heads with one another to ensure they have the highest number of voters (Basil & Bassey, 2016). Political parties use various marketing communication strategies to inform the people, but the strategy that produces the best outcome has always been a problem. During the election conducted in the 1979 to usher in the second republic, virtually all political parties employ marketing communication strategies such as personal selling, direct marketing, sales promotion, advertising and so on (Worlu, 2010). Adam, Kirsch and Weils ??1943) as cited in Staff (2014) observe that the problem with political candidates is that they delegate their conscience to the party they belong, and unconsciously promised the people what they will not do, this has caused supporters to lose interest during electioneering, discouraged voters in the various political parties, and have made the marketing communication strategies somewhat ineffective. For instance, in the 2015 general presidential election in Nigeria, the total numbers of registered voters were 44 percent, compared to previous years, which was higher, for example in (2011) 54 percent, (2007) 57 percent, (2003) 69 percent, and in (1999) 52 percent (Fagunwa, 2015). As a result Political parties who are known to be election oriented people with primary motives to get their various candidates into office Wayne, Mackenzie, O'Brien, and Cole (1997), ensure that they know the what, how, and when to use the various blend of the marketing communication strategies (Basil et al 2016) and the effectiveness of each, in order to increase and encourage voters behaviour.

Marketing communication is the process of employing all strategies, tactics, and activities involved in getting the desired marketing messages to intended target markets, regardless of the media used (McCormick 2007) as cited in (Potluri, 2008). In other words, marketing communication plays a major role in every sector of the economy and the political environment is no exception. The introduction of classical methods of marketing communication tools such as advertising, personal selling and relationship marketing have marked the dawn of

a new day in electioneering process. Voters need information about the features of the product (candidate) or service, its price and how they can access it, to make informed purchase decision (Potluri 2008). Hence the aim of this study was to determine the relationship and the effect of marketing communication strategies and voters behaviour in electioneering process. voters, as a result of inadequate use of marketing communication strategies. Nzeribe (1992) as cited in (Worlu, 2010) opined that before the 1960 colonial administration organized a couple of general election without systematic and adequate use of political marketing communication. The reason for this is because the person feels it is none of their business, that is, coming out to vote does not determine a means of their livelihood. Wrong notion, isn't it? Also, there has been misuse or wrong combination of the marketing communication strategies. Other factors include dissatisfaction with past government, electoral processes and some people feels that coming out will make no difference in their lives (McCormick, 2007).

Governments have had the problem of involving the masses of the ordinary citizens in coming out to vote during elections. The various political parties are also without this problem, they cannot easily get people out to the polls, and so how to reap this particular advantage overtime has posed a bit of a problem. This then begs the question; how can the voters be mobilized to get out and vote motivated this study?

2 b) Objectives of the study

The broad objective is to determine the impact of marketing communication strategies and voters behaviour in electioneering process in Cross River State. The specific objectives are to:

i. Examine the relationship between Advertising and voters behaviour in electioneering process; ii. Determine the relationship between personal selling and voters behaviour in electioneering process; iii. Investigate the relationship between relationship marketing and voters behaviour in electioneering process; iv. Determine the effect of marketing communication strategies on voters' behaviour in electioneering process.

3 c) Hypotheses

4 Review of Related Literature a) Theoretical Framework

This study is premised on the following theories:

? Theory of persuasion

? Empirical political theory Theory of persuasion: Greek Philosophers 6 th Century Theory of persuasion was developed in the 6 th century by the Greeks philosophers. It assumes that persuasion can be used as an attempt to change or influence perception, behaviour, cognition, motivations, and beliefs of the public. It explains that there should be credibility and reputation in electioneering process.

The theory is relevant to the study because it serves as a motivating factor for political candidates/ parties to actualize their campaign goals and objectives.

5 Empirical political theory: Heineman 1996

Heineman, ??1996) postulates that all political theorizing is empirical in that in order to be useful it must have some relationship to actual political behaviour and beliefs. A major problem with empirical theory is its tendency to treat political life too narrowly.

This theory is applicable to the study because it utilizes and tends to rely on assumptions of individual self-interest and rational behaviour of voters and it defines rational behaviour of voters in present logical terms. In other words, when carefully formulated it contributes a great deal to our understanding of political behaviour.

6 b) The concept of marketing communication

Every aspect of human endeavors involves communication. There are various means a political party can use to influence voters' behaviour, but for the purpose of this study emphasis was on marketing communication strategies such as advertising, personal selling and relationship marketing. Many factors tend to influence the choice of a particular communication tool. One of such factors is the nature of the product or the nature of the target audience or the degree of competition (Agbonifoh et al 2007). Kotler and Armstrong (2010) referred to marketing communication as the specific blend of advertising, personal selling, sales promotion, direct marketing and so on that an organization or institution uses to persuasively communicate customer value and to build customer relationship. In order to achieve political and electoral objective in contemporary election one or a combination of the marketing communication strategies is required for the desired result.

7 ? Advertising

The importance of advertising cannot be over emphasized. It is one of the most commonly used communication tool that does not require the personal (individual) presence of the communicator to achieve desired response. Advertising as a communication tool is effective in electioneering process, for the simplest reason that its message could easily be understood using songs through medium such as radio and television, bill boards, newspaper and so on. No matter the nature of the product, level of education, social status or other related factors, advertising is most effective for wider reach. Advertising does not only create awareness or provide information it also adds

value to a product (political candidate) by influencing the perception of the consumers (voters) about the political candidate (Ebitu 2002). Worlu (2010) observes that advertising gain prominence in 1963 after independence when Chief Obafemi Awolowo of Action Group used it to send messages to the publics. It is a paid form of nonpersonal presentation and promotion of ideas, goods or services by identified sponsors (Agbonifoh et al 2007).

The key distinguishing feature or unique feature of advertising as opposed to other marketing communication tool is its nature or ability to be paid for example radio, television, and newspaper unlike personal selling, relationship marketing and so on which are not instantly paid for. Kotler (2010) observe that although advertising is used mostly by business firms, a wide range of non-profit organization (government, political parties, churches) also employ the use of advertising. Ebitu (2002) is of the view that advertising is a non-personal communication which is openly paid for and meant to affect a company or individual's target audience and/or market positively in order to elicit acceptance of ideas, goods and services, individuals or institutions. Adetayo (2002) gave two basic types of advertising to include (1) product advertising (2) institutional advertising.

Product advertising is the process of that focuses on selling specially identified goods and services examples include cooperative and comparative advertising. Institutional advertising on the other hand, is a form of advertising that lays emphasis on the image or personality of a product category rather than a brand(physical product), example a political campaign program or a political candidate. Kotler and Armstrong (2010) and Agbonifoh et al (2007) gave some important decisions that involve advertising campaign programs for an effective electoral outcome;

- i. Situation and market analysis-organization current market problems, strength, weaknesses of its product and organization resources.
- ii. Selling advertising objectives-specific communication task to be accomplished with a specific target audience during a specific period of time.
- iii. Advertising budget-ability to be able to allocate funds judiciously and fairly.
- iv. Developing advertising strategy-organizational ability to be able to create advertising messages that the people will accept without doubt and selecting the best media {e.g. electronic media or print media}.
- v. Evaluation-the most difficult process, it is the ability of the advertiser to be able to determine the audience, the effect of the advertising objective and also able to take corrective measures.

? Personal selling Just the way voters require information to know the right candidate; candidates also need information to give voters positive impression about themselves. People hold many stereotypes of sales people including unfavorable ones (Kotler et al 2010) just like voters hold different views of political candidates in every electioneering process. Adetayo (2002) defined personal selling as a direct seller and a potential customer. It is a tool that helps a political candidate communicates with voters in order to get more attention. In other words, personal selling is the interpersonal, face-to-face interaction for the purpose of creating, modifying, exploiting or maintaining a mutually beneficial exchange relationship (Agbonifoh, Ogwo, Nnolim, Nkamnebe, 2007). Similarly, Adetayo (2002) opine that, personally selling is quite unique more than other marketing communication strategies because of its ability to adjust and stay in touch with the prospects, voters, supporters, citizens as the case maybe. It requires an individual to be involved in the selling process personally or hire the services of a salesman who can take up the responsibilities/ activities of the personal selling process effectively. Ebitu (2002) point out that it is now a common feature of most businesses (individual or group) to use sales person in marketing their product and services for example; for example, recently in the U.S political campaign Beyoncé and the husband Jay Z who are popular international musicians took the position of the sales forces of Hilary Clinton wore T-shirts with an inscription "I am with her" to communicate Clinton to the world to attract voters' support. Similarly, Kellyanne Conway Donald Trump's campaign manager also played the role of Trumps sales person, in an interview with CNBC she noted that Trump won the peoples election because "He's a game player", she also added "Trump is a problem-solver. He's a builder", Conway said. Author Robert Louis Stevenson (n.d) as cited in Kotler (2010) notes that "everyone lives by selling something" either they use sale forces or sell it themselves, it should be noted that when applying personal selling in electioneering process, the right words should be by sales force in order to portray a positive image to the voters. Dennisw (2008) has it in the New York Times, April, 1, 2007 that Axelrod was known to be useful to assist Rahm Emanuel the present Mayor of Chicago in the 2006 election to take over the house of representative from the republicans. He also used this success to help Deval Patrick become governor of Massachusetts, in the United States. What Axelrod did basically was not just to sell policies but also personalities and leadership (Basil & Bassey 2016).

8 ? Relationship marketing

For any political party to exhibit anew a dimension in the electioneering process, relationship marketing is a strategic weapon that can aid and make people have listening ears or interest. Because of the competitive nature of political parties, relationship marketing helps in increasing the awareness of each party and also handles complex factors such as competition of the other parties in determining their relationship with the masses (voters). Imagine a political candidate who go all the way to hug, shake hands and carry little children in order to achieve campaign objectives, for example Hilary Clinton of the Democratic party, and Donald Trump a Republican in the United States. Kotler, (2010) referred to relationship marketing as managing detailed information about the individual customers (voters) touch point, in order to maximize customer loyalty. The idea behind relationship politics as suggested by (Olotu & Ogunro, 2013) is geared towards building mutually satisfying long-term relationships with key players in the political arena, and not just the candidates and voters. Berkowitz, et al (1994) suggests that relationship marketing is revolutionized in today's market because of the complex factors influencing political

party leaders. Sodaro, et al (2001) points out that political power is relational in nature and therefore, involves either bargaining or coercion. Irrespective of the type of power both can be at work in relationship marketing in order to be able to exert influence.

Political parties need to acknowledge the importance of nurturing and developing a variety of relationships as a long-term strategic imperative in the election process, if they must build a stronger and long lasting relationship (Banon, 2008). With relationship marketing it is easier to reach specific household (Sodaro, et al 2001). Also, satisfying marketing opportunities means that political parties should have a cordial one-to-one relationship with its audience. Thus it enables the political candidates/ parties to have understanding of the market place, needs of the target audience. It serves as a guiding factor between the campaign parties and the citizens. Pate, Nwabueze, & Odiong (2013) as cited in (Basil & Bassey 2016) opines that political parties pays little attention to marketing communication strategies, that the notable period that saw effective relationship marketing play in politics was in 1993 election of June 12 between M.K.O Abiola and Bashir Tofa. Abiola was able to build good relations with the then citizens of Nigeria. Relationship marketing seeks to establish long-term, committed, trusting and co-operative relationship between political candidates and the voters. In other words, it helps to build trust and ensures that promises are kept (Agbonifoh et al, 2007).

9 c) Electioneering process and political parties

Political party is a group of officials or would be officials who are linked with a sizeable group of citizens into an organization with the aim of ensuring that its officials attain or maintain power (Shelves, 2005). The first modern electoral democracy was the United States of America and it was here that the first party was developed in the 1820s and the oldest in the world. Notable political parties in USA are the Democrat and Republican. Political Parties have been widely copied and are found in many countries, for example in Nigeria we have; The People's Democratic Party (PDP), All Progressive Congress (APC), Egypt; National Democratic Party and so on. Shelves is of the opinion that the main effect of holding elections was to involve the masses of ordinary citizens in acting out their support and by so doing strengthening that support. He says that for this to happen millions of voters must be stimulated to go out and take the trouble to vote and achieving this means utilizing the various blend of the political marketing communication strategies.

In electioneering process there must one or more forms of political parties, who aspire to have a large numbers of voters. This is important in today's contemporary environment because government power directly and fundamentally affects the lives of most people in the world (Heineman, 1996). In the rudimentary sense parties have existed almost as long as forms of government, but without marketing communications strategies the people will not be informed correctly about the activities of government, neither will they know the political parties to vote for or carry out political activities of the nation. By definition, politics is a practical activity, the discourse and the struggle over the organization of human possibilities (Held, 1989). It involves the use of power by one person or a group of people to affect the behaviour of another person or a group (Shelves 2005). Politics creates and conditions all aspects of our lives and it is at the core of the development of collective problems and the modes of their resolution (Held, 1989). Political transformation (social or physical) requires that political parties campaign should have a vast knowledge and know how marketing communication strategies such as advertising, personal selling and relationship marketing to enable voters support in electioneering process.

10 d) Bases of voters' electoral choices

Electoral choices are determined solely by how the various political parties have been able to communicate their candidates to the publics (voters). Shelves (2005) have it that voters' electoral choice can be distinguished using factors as short and long-term factors. Short-term factors are things about a particular election that may lead a person to vote one way or another. For example, if times are bad, a number of people will vote against whomever, is in the office as a way of showing their unhappiness. Long term factors on the other hand, is the commitment of various social groups to a particular political party over time. These two factors have been seen to be practiced by voters in recent times. Contemporary voters may likely not be moved by the aforementioned unless and only if political candidates can deliver on campaign promises by employing the marketing communication strategies efficiently and effectively. Extended by: the researcher (2016)

The diagram reveals that when electioneering process is centered on marketing communication strategies it will influence voters' behaviour, which will in turn yield adequate campaign effectiveness. It shows that campaign officials, political candidate and voters' all have need for up to date information, which can be achieved through a carefully blend of marketing communications strategies.

11 III.

12 Methodology

The study adopted a survey research, which explores the use of both primary and secondary data; primary data were gotten from questionnaire instruments and secondary data from related literature. In 2011, Cross River was estimated to have a population 3.338 million by the National Population Commission, but for the area of study we have; 222,980 in Odukpani, 221,400 Calabar south, 212,340 Calabar municipal and 314,750 in Akpabuyo

respectively and the addition of these four Local Government Areas formed the population of the study as 971, 470. The Taro Yamane's formula was thereafter used to determine the sample, which amounted to 400. It was then divided into four strata based on the Local Government Areas, after which the systematic sampling was used to select 100 respondents from each of the Local Government Areas in three political parties APC, PDP, and Labour Party (LP). Three hypotheses were formulated and tested with the Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient while the fourth hypothesis was tested using the multiple linear regression analytical tools on SPSS/PASW (version 20) at 0.05 percent significance. A five Likert type was employed, (strongly agreed, agreed, undecided, disagreed, and strongly disagreed). The table shows the respondents' perception of the impact of marketing communication strategies on voters' behaviour in the electioneering process. Statistical analysis showed that, the calculated r-value of 0.487 is greater than the critical r-value of 0.098 at 0.05 level of significance with 398 degrees of freedom. This means that, there is a significant relationship between advertising and voters' behaviour in the electioneering process in Cross River State. To support 58

13 c) Test of hypotheses Hypothesis one

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15 A

The table shows that out of the 400 respondents surveyed 204 representing 51.0 percent were male; and 196 representing 49.0 were females. It shows that, 117 representing 29.3 percent were between the ages of 18-28 years; 192 representing 48.0 were between 29-38 years; 55 representing 13.8 percent were 39-48 years; and 36 representing 9.0 percent were 49 years and above. It also shows that 230 respondents representing 57.5 percent attended tertiary education; 135 representing 33.8 percent were secondary school certificate holders; and 35 representing 8.8 percent attended primary education.

16 b) Respondents' views on marketing communication strategies and voters' behaviour in the electioneering process

Table 1 Table ?? Table ?? messages will be easily disseminated, even to an average Nigerian. They strongly agreed that, advertising is the fastest form of strategy in the electioneering process which has a wider reach. According to Daignault, Soroka, & Giasson (2013) it was discovered that positive advertising generates positive judgments, that television advertising is critical for any modern electioneering process. A study by Ojekwe (2015) revealed that political advertising plays some role in voting behaviour, it suggests that radio and television are very strong advertising tools to be employed. From the analysis above it could be observed that the calculated r-value of .191 is greater than the critical r-value of 0.098 at 0.05 level of significance with 398 degrees of freedom. It follows that, there is a positive relationship between relationship marketing and voters' behaviour in the electioneering process. To support this, Gbadeyan (2010), Olotu and Ogunro (2013) reveals that relational political marketing would engender economic, technical, and social ties between voters, parties and electorates through trust, bonding, communication, empathy, reciprocity, shared value, and sociality, if properly utilized. In addition, Ngwoke (2011) supports this finding by adding, that political parties give out things like caps, diaries, and key holders and so on to ensure a mutual relation with their supporters. Also, Political parties should constitute an effective committee to monitor and evaluate the effect of their relationship with the public. Result of table four shows the composite success of marketing communication strategies on voters' behaviour in the electioneering process. The analysis indicates that, the calculated f-ratio of 47.631 at 0.05 level of significance using 3 and 396 degrees of freedom. The implication of this is that, when advertising, personal selling, and relationship marketing are taken together, they can significantly predict voters' behaviour in the electioneering process. The coefficient of advertising (0.327), shows that, a percentage change in the use of advertising while other variables are held constant would lead to 32.7 percent increase in voters' support. The coefficients of personal selling (.221), shows that, a percentage change in the use of personal selling while other variables are held constant would lead to 22.1 percent increase in voters' support. The coefficients of relationship marketing (.006) shows that, a percentage change in the use of relationship marketing while other variables are held constant would lead to 6 percent increase in voters' support.

17 Hypothesis

The R^2 of the multiple regression measures the degree of association between marketing communications strategies (advertising, personal selling and relationship marketing) and voters' behaviour. It shows that 26.5 percent of the variation in voters' behavior is explained by the variation of marketing communications strategies, while 73.5% of the variation in the electioneering process is explained by other variables which are extraneous to the study. The t statistics in the table shows that, the calculated t value for advertising (10.006), personal selling (3.207), are all greater than the critical t value of 1.966 except for relationship marketing (.105) at 0.05 level of significance using 398 degrees of freedom. This means that, there is a significant relationship between marketing

communication strategies in terms of advertising, personal selling, and relationship marketing and performance and success of electioneering process in Cross River State Nigeria.

V.

18 Conclusion

The relationship between marketing communication strategies in election has shown that advertising, personal selling, and relationship marketing are abstemiously effective in creating awareness and apprising voters about an election. Studies have shown that marketing communication is all embracing and the political environment is not an exception (Basil et al., 2016). On this note, political parties should endeavor to know how marketing strategies works in electioneering and how best it can be applied in order to achieve electoral objectives. Political parties campaign effectiveness is not achieved through common value systems, or general respect for the authority of the state, or brute force and so on (Held, 1989), but by how well the various political marketing communication tool is used to convince voters, because the precariousness of todays government is a link between the citizens of a country through effective communications.

19 VI. Policy Implication/Recommendations

The study strongly recommends the followings;

- i. A research should be carried out prior to election in order to know the most effective marketing communication strategy for a particular target audience.
- ii. Political parties should rely more on the use of advertising, since it yielded high percentage of voters support.
- iii. Political parties should also adopt the use of personal selling and relationship marketing in every electioneering process.
- iv. Political candidates should be made to face voters/ relate with voters formally and informally for them to be objectively assessed.

1

Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Co-efficient analysis of the relationship between advertising and voters behaviour in electioneering process in Cross River State.

Variables	X	S.D	r
Advertising	13.04	2.26	0.487**
Voters Behaviour	12.76	1.66	

Significant at 0.05; DF= 398; critical r = 0.098

Figure 1: H0 1 :

4

Hypothesis Four

H0 4 : Marketing communication strategies does not have any significant effect on voters' behavior in electioneering process in Cross River State.

Multiple linear regression analysis is used for the test of marketing communications strategies and voters behaviour in electioneering process.

Figure 2: Table 4

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Model	B	STD Error	BETA	t	Sign
(Constant)	5.623	.775		7.256	.000
Advertising	0.327	.033	.446	10.006	.000
P.Selling	0.221	.069	.169	3.207	.001
Relationship	.006	.054	.005	.105	.917

R=.515; R² = .265; Adjusted R² = .260; S.E= 1.427
Significant at 0.05; critical t= 1.966; critical F= 2.62

Figure 3: Table 5 Table 6

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