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SUSTAINING THE ROLE OF MARKETING STRATEGIES IN NIGERIAN ELECTORAL POLITICS

Rowland E. Worlu

Department of Business Studies, Covenant University, Ota

E-mail: worlurek@yahoo.com

Abstract

This paper builds on recent studies which identified the roles of marketing strategies in politics as responsive leadership, mass mobilization, political branding, conflict management, promotion of democratic ideals. The focus of the present study is to determine how best to sustain these roles in Nigerian electoral democracy. Four dominant political parties that emerged from the 2003 General Elections were sampled out of thirty political parties that participated in the elections and their electorates. Eight hundred (800) copies of the questionnaire were administered, and six hundred and twenty six (626) were returned; out of which five hundred and ninety eight (598) were found usable. Their answers to the questionnaire formed the data which were analyzed with tables, frequencies, and percentages to crystallize the findings. The findings show that marketing strategies in Nigerian electoral politics can be sustained through continuous political enlightenment, involvement of innovative politicians, basic marketing training for the operators of the political system, continuous use of marketing research and planning in politics. Based on these findings, it is recommended that Nigerian political actors(including democratic institutions) should take deliberate steps to increase the magnitude of Political marketing by acting out and thinking in marketing terms, among others.



Keywords: Sustenance, marketing strategies, election, politics, democracy

Introduction

Essentially, politics is about power; but the struggle for power results in conflict and competition. Therefore, under girding political practice is the struggle for power which creates disagreement and conflict. Nevertheless, the effects of politics which are conflict and disagreement are never permanent, and must be managed for the improvement of society to be achieved. From another dimension, politics is about policy. Extending this view, Bruce Miller in Nzimiro (1992) states that 'policy is a matter of either the desire for change or the desire to protect something against change. This also leads to conflict. According to Nzimiro (1992), politics in modern society is expressed through political parties which are created to achieve the goals of society. This is why political parties are organized around specific ideas often called 'ideologies'. Originally, they were formed from local communities and the spread of their influence evolve from the establishment of the electoral system.

The history of human civilization shows clearly that class conflict is an inherent characteristic of human societies. Whereas in the past, this conflict derived from disproportionate ownership of land capital, today it is basically expressed in the control of state apparatus and media.

What is more? Each class saw marketing as a weapon to be employed in the ideological war of politics. The result is that political parties have now become the platforms for rearing leaders who are keenly interested in the contest for power through the electoral system. Politics now becomes the struggle to control the power base, as the state establishes its machinery for controlling the populace. The control of the populace is not always obvious for human nature abhors absolute dependence. Thus, political control is often disguised when the winning group controls political power, its constituent members, and operatives become the ultimate beneficiaries. Today, the electoral process has become the expression of the democratic form of struggle within a given class system.

A participant in this power struggle who is aptly called 'a politician' and whose aim is to be in government has to market himself and his party's manifesto. He must be able to convince his electorate that his party's programme is more relevant to their needs than his competitors'. In addition, he must convince them that he can ably represent them and ensure that his party's programme is implemented. According to Ohiwerei (2002), the political party can be likened to a company, the party ideology to a company's mission statement; the party manifesto to a company's marketing strategy/plans, and the party candidate to a brand. The logical conclusion following from this thought process is that a political party, if it is to be effective and successful, should operate like a business or a company. Given this analogy, there is no gainsaying the relevance of marketing in politics.

The success of any company depends on the success of its brands or services. Similarly, the success of a political party in an election depends on the success of its candidates. It is imperative therefore for the politician to have a close look at what makes a brand successful.



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In brand marketing, the key to success is a thorough understanding of the market, the consumer and the competition, by the help of the market research. The knowledge thus acquired helps in having a clear vision of the role the brand will play in the market. That role must meet a particular need better than competing brands. In other words, the adoption of a marketing approach in politics promises to bring about rationality in our political processes.

Nevertheless, this study on sustaining the role of marketing strategies in politics takes its bearing from the 2003 General Elections. The choice of 2003 General Elections was informed by the following: (1) It was the first civilian to civilian election since independence to survive Military intervention, (2) It was the first election in Nigeria to be heavily monitored by both local and international election observers with a verdict of success (Olukkotun, 2003), (3) It was the first time Nigeria's political space was enlarged to accommodate as many as 30 political parties. (4) It was the first time Nigerians witnessed the application of information and communication technology into election processes, and this culminated in the adoption of electronic voters register which addressed the problem of multiple registration associated with past voters' register (Guobadia, 2003).

Theoretical framework

The current state of political marketing

It has been argued that the application of marketing tools and instruments in politics is nothing new (Perloff, 1999; Baines and Egan 2001). This may be controvertible, but what certainly has changed in the last 25 years is not just the magnitude of political marketing management but the belief that political actors (i.e. political parties, politicians, governments, single-issue groups, lobbying organisations, etc) do not only act out but also 'think' in marketing terms. (Harris et al, 1999; Nimmo, 1999; Harris, 2001a). They believed that they do marketing management, and they try to integrate their use of marketing instruments in a coherent marketing strategy (Newman, 1994a; Dermody and Scullion, 2001).

The changes in the 'mind sets' of political actors have been tracked in several studies. (Jamieson, 1992; Scammell, 1994, 1995; Lees-Marshment, 2001; Wring, 2001; Wring, 2002b) and have been considered a 'revolution' (Lees-Marshment, 2001) or even a "new age in politics" (Newman, 1999). "Mind sets' of political actors" refers to the attitudinal and perceptual disposition of participants in democratic process. These participants will include political parties, candidates for elections, electorates, party functionaries and supporters.

In addition, political marketing application have moved from solely a communication tool to an integrated way of managing politics, be it policy development, permanent campaigning (Nimmo, 1999), or even governing (to the extent that government has become 'symbolic' in certain circumstances) (O'Shaughnessy, 2003). Six main developments of applied uses of political marketing can be generated for most democratic political systems in the last two decades, and these are:

1. An increased sophistication of communication and 'spin' (Kavanagh, 1995; Kaid, 1999; Sherman, 1999; Harris, 2001b; Lees-Marshment, 2001; Palmer, 2003);
2. Strategies for product and image management (Scammell, 1995; Baines et al, 2002; White and de Chernatony, 2002);

3. News management i.e. the use of 'free' media (Franklin, 1994; Schnur, 1999; Franklin and Richardson, 2002);
4. More coherent and planned political marketing strategy development (Newman, 1994a
5. Butler and Collins, 1999; Kotler 1999; Lees-Marshment, 2001; Henneberg, 2002; Wring, 2002a);
6. Intensified and integrated use of political market research (Huber and Hermann, 1999; Mitchell and Daves, 1999; Smith and Hirst, 2001; Sparrow and Tunner, 2001; Sherman and Schiffman, 2002);
7. Emphasis on political marketing organisation and professionalization (Panebianco, 1988; Lees-Marshment, 2001).

However, most political actors are far from having an integrated and sophisticated understanding of marketing applications for their political exchange situations. Political marketing management in politics has caused some 'leading' parties and candidates to adopt a simplistic and populist "follower"-mentality, contributing to the disenchantment of the electorate and a resulting cynicism regarding politics in general (Henneberg, 2005). Research on political marketing showing serious, intensive, coordinated research activities on marketing applications in politics constitutes a fairly recent addition to the area of social and non-profit marketing. The field of political marketing started to form about twenty years ago with several seminal contributions (Manser, 1983; Newman and Sheth, 1985; Farrel and Wortman, 1987; Reid, 1998; Harrop, 1990; O'Shaughnessy, 1990; Smith and Saunders, 1990) that introduced topical foci and in-depth analyses of marketing instruments; out of which none proffered a 'general' theory. However, research on political marketing quickly gained momentum, driven mainly by the dynamic development of marketing applications by political parties and candidates.

To provide a new understanding of some basic phenomena and the reactions of political actors, research on political marketing has become an established sub-discipline of marketing, especially in France, U.K, Germany, Australia, as well as the USA (Perloff, 1999). The need to describe and understand these phenomena instigated numerous publications in standard marketing and political journals (e.g. special issues on political marketing in the European Journal of Marketing, the Journal of Marketing Management, of the Journal of Public Affairs) as well as books and monographs (Newman, 1994a; Kavanagh, 1995; Scammel 1995; Newman, 1995b; Lees-Marshment, 2001; O'Shaughnessy and Hanneberg, 2002b) .

Efficiency theory

Efficiency theory has been instrumental in establishing what constitutes performance in an organization (Drucker, 1978). Johnie (1988) points out that performance achieved by managers is actually made up of two important dimensions, namely: effectiveness and efficiency.

Effectiveness is the ability to choose appropriate goals and achieve them. To put it perspective, Drucker points out that effectiveness is essentially doing (i.e. accomplishing) the right things.

Efficiency, on the other hand, according to Drucker, is the ability to make the best use of available resources in the process of achieving organizational goals. Drucker calls this "doing the right thing".

In essence, political parties as an organization needs to exhibit both effectiveness (doing things right) in order to achieve a high

level of performance.

Hunt (1994) indicates that productivity is the goal of a political party, and he calls productivity a performance measure which includes effectiveness and efficiency. Robbins (2001) maintains that productivity implies a concern for both effectiveness and efficiency. He further argues that effectiveness means achievement of goals, while efficiency is the ratio of effective output to the required to achieve it.

A political party, for example, is effective when it wins at the polls but it is efficient if it does so at a low cost. In other words, a political party is effective when it attains its votes or vote-share goals, but its productivity also depends on achieving those goals efficiently. Popular measures of political party efficiency include vote-share, size of membership, party growth rate, winning spread, minimal intra party conflict, minimal defections out of the party, (Barack, 1995).

Research methods

This study adopted the two (2) common types of research methods. These include the survey, and ex-post facto methods. The nature of this study is such that a combination of the two approaches is expedient because of their capacity in collecting large and standardized data. These standardized data provide information that answer the research question.

The respondents for this work were officials and electorates of the four dominant parties in six geopolitical zones of Nigeria which constituted the population of this study. The zones and the states involved are: South-South (Rivers State), South-West (Lagos) South-East (Anambra State), North-West (Zamfara), North-Central (Niger State), and North-East (Bauchi and Bornu State). Cross-sectional type of research design was also employed because of the involvement of different parties and states in this study.

Sample size determination and sampling techniques

The sample for this study consisted of 800 respondents: 400 of these respondents were randomly drawn from the 4 dominant political parties. These party respondents consisted of party officials at the national, state, and local government levels in the selected states. The other sample of 400 respondents from the electorate consisted of all eligible voters in the selected states. Table 1.1 below indicates the results of April 19, 2003 presidential elections which lends credence to the parties in dominance.

Table 1.0: The Result of April 19, 2003 Presidential Elections

PARTY	CANDIDATES	SCORED NOTES	TOTAL % OF VOTES	QUOTAS VALID
PDP	Olusegun Obasanjo	24,109,159	61.80	29 of 25
ANPP	Mohammadu Buhari	12,495,326	32.03	17 of 25

APGA	Chukwuemeka Ojukwu	1,295,655	3.32	2 of 25
UNPP	Jim I. Nwobodo	166,735	0.43	0 of 25
PAC	Sarah N. Jibril	156,286	0.40	0 of 25
NCP	Ganiyu Fawehinmi	145,716	0.37	0 of 25
NDP	Ike O.S. Nwachukwu	130,806	0.34	0 of 25
APLP	Osita Emmanuel Okereke	126,212	0.03	0 of 25
JP	Chris Ogeneborie Okotie	119,220	0.03	0 of 25
PRP	Musa A. Balarabe	100,662	0.26	0 of 25
PMP	Agwucha A. Nwankwo	56,532	0.14	0 of 25
NNPP	Kalu Idika Kalu	23,646	0.06	0 of 25
BNPP	Ifeayinchukwu G.N.	22,524	0.06	0 of 25
MDJ	Muhammadu D.Y.	21,235	0.05	0 of 25
ARP	G.K.E. Ndu Yahaya	13,316	0.03	0 of 25
DA	Antonia A.J. Ferreira	8,367	0.02	0 of 25

NAP	Tunji Braithwaite	6,834	0.02	0 of 25
NAC	Olapade (R.O.) Agoro	5,735	0.01	0 of 25
LDPN	Christopher P. Ajuwa	4,408	0.01	0 of 25
MMN	Mojisola A. Obasanjo	3,699	0.01	0 of 25

Source: Tell (Lagos), May 5, 2003, P.25

The last column of table 1.1 (i.e quotas valid) indicates that the Leader Party (PDP) scored at least 25% of the total votes cast in 29 out of 36 States. The Challenger Party (ANPP) scored at least 25% of the total votes cast in 17 out of 36 States. The Nicher Party (APGA) scored at least 25% of the votes cast in 2 out of 36 States. In view of the need for some degree of randomness of data and non-availability of complete sample frame occasioned by non-participation of AD in the presidential polls, the researcher relied on the fact that AD was in control of the reins of executive arm of government in Lagos state to include it as a dominant party in line with the stance of Henneberg, (2003) This is shown in table 2.0 below.

Table 2.0: Proportion of Party Dominance Based on 2003 Presidential Elections

PARTY	VOTES SCORED	TOTAL % OF VOTES	QUOTAS VALID
PDP	24,109,159	66.80	29 OF 25
ANPP	12,495,326	32.03	17 OF 25
APGA	1,295,655	3.32	2 OF 25

AD	-	-	-
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Source: Tell (Lagos), May 5, 2003, p.25

Based on table 1.0 and 2.0 above, the sample for the study which is 800 has been distributed as indicated on table 3.5 below.

Table 3.0: Sample Distribution According to Proportion of Dominance

	PDP	ANPP	AD	APGA	SAMPLE TOTAL
Party Official	200	120	40	40	400
Electorates	200	120	40	40	400
Total	400	240	80	80	800
Percentage	50%	30%	10%	10%	100%

Based on table 3.0 above, the study adopted a combination of methods in selecting samples. One is probability sample selection method in which stratified and cluster techniques were employed. The other was non-probability sample selection method whereby convenience, quota, and judgmental samples were generated. In applying the above methods, the whole country was stratified into six geopolitical zones. Each zone formed a cluster whereby a particular state was purposively selected as sample unit. In selecting the samples, the researcher avoided states where gross electoral irregularities were reported by local and international election observers (Vanguard 26 May, 2003). The Federal Capital Territory (Abuja) was included as the seventh cluster where a sample of 40 respondents was taken because these parties have their head-quarters in Abuja where strategic policies affecting the conduct and practice of political marketing are evolved. In all, 800 copies of the questionnaire were administered.

Estimation of the party sample size

Guilford and Fruchter (1973) postulated the formula below to determine the sample size for the study of the dominant parties.

$$n = \frac{N}{\sum [(1+N(e)^2)]}$$

Where;

n=the desired sample size to be determined

N=total population

e=accepted error limit (0.05) on the basis of 95% confidence level.

In our case :

N=7944

e=0.05

n=sample size

$$\text{Therefore : } n = \frac{7944}{1+7944(0.05)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{7944}{7945(0.05)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{7944}{7945(0.0025)}$$

$$n = \frac{7944}{19.8625}$$

$$n = 399.9496539$$

Approximately 400 party officials.

Estimation of the sample size of the electorate

Daniel and Terrel (2006) advanced the formula below for estimating sample size:

$$n = \frac{Z^2 r^2}{d^2}$$

Thus from the pilot survey that preceded the study, the following values were generated:

Z=level of confidence =1.96

r= population of variability(variance)-(standard deviation)²=73.10

d=discrepancy to be tolerated between the true value of estimated parameter (i.e. voter-focused strategic flexibility). This is

one-half of the desired internal width which is 40.

$$\text{Therefore } n = \frac{(1.96)^2(73.10)^2}{40}$$

40

$$n = 400.769$$

approximately 400 voters

Sample Distribution at a Glance

<u>ANPP</u> NE = 120 NW = 110 FCT = 10 240	<u>PDP</u> NC = 120 SS = 180 SW = 40 SE = 50 FCT = 10 400	<u>APGA</u> SE = 70 FCT = 10 80	<u>AD</u> SW = 70 FCT = 10 80
Grand Total = 800			

Validity test

The research instrument was adapted from multi-item scale instruments developed by Conant, Mokwa, and Varadarajan (1990) to operationalize the Miles and Snow's strategic typology. There has also been a qualitative adaptation of Narver and Slater (1990, 1994) constructs into this study. Although the above two constructs had been tested for validity in many recent studies, the questionnaire in this study was additionally submitted to two separate panels of four Professors and researchers. These researchers were sourced from Rivers State University of Science and Technology, and University of Port Harcourt, all in Port Harcourt, as well as University of Lagos and Lagos State University, in Lagos. These panels comprised individuals with backgrounds and expertise in marketing. These experts vetted the set of questions to establish further validity and credibility assurance, by advising and commenting on the questionnaires' design to ensure overall relevance and congruence with case

context.

Further reliability tests

The Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient is known and widely used reliability test. Alpha ranges in value from 0 to 1; and is used to describe the reliability of factors extracted from dichotomous or multi point formulated questionnaires or scale.

Table 3.1 below shows the Alpha Coefficient for three key variables of the research: sustaining democracy, marketing strategies, and political marketing orientation. Also, the values of Guttman's Split-half Reliability Test has been computed here to compare and confirm the reliability of the Alpha Coefficients for the three key variables.

Statistically, values of about 0.70 are considered adequate to conclude internal consistency (Nunally, 1978). The results obtained here therefore indicate that the instruments used in this research are reliable.

Table 3.1: Reliability Estimates of the Key Variables

Variable	Cronbach's Coefficient	Guttman's Split-Half Reliability Index
Sustaining Democracy	0.72	0.85
Marketing Strategies.	0.85	0.85
Political marketing orientation.	0.70	0.79

Presentation of result and analyses

Demographic Characteristics of Samples

Table 4.0 Sample Characteristics of Party Questionnaire (Officials)

	PDP	ANPP	AD	APGA	TOTAL

Number of target respondents*	200	120	40	40	400
Share of actual respondents	150	80	35	33	298
Share of response rate (%)	75	66.7	87.5	82.5	74.5
Share of male (in %)	60.4	54.0	50.5	50.7	53.9
Share of female (in %)	39.6	46.0	49.5	49.3	46.1
Average age in years(standard deviation in bracket)	41(17.68)	39(16.09)	40(14.12)	38(12.56)	39(15.44)
Respondents who completed university education (in %)	26.4	14.5	36.5	17.3	24.4
Share of respondents who are married (in %)	62.7	55.0	43.5	37.6	48.6
Share of respondents who hold office in the party with secondary education and above.	80.5	65.5	75.5	72.5	73.5

Source: Field Survey of Dominant Parties: 2003 Elections, 2007

Demographic characteristics of the total sample in phase two of the study are presented in table 4.1 below. The geopolitical zone subsamples are similar with respect to the age of the respondents, but differ with respect to the average level of education, employments status and relative household income. Since the data collection was limited to major cities, the sample does not correspond entirely to the characteristics of the population in the geopolitical zone compared to the general population of the geopolitical zone because people living in the cities are better educated, the employment level is higher and so is the household income. Our main motivation for limiting the survey to larger cities was only the concentration of enlightened electorate in these areas which represent the natural entry points for political parties and their candidates.

Table 4.1 Sample Characteristics of Electorate

	PDP	ANPP	AD	APGA	TOTAL
Target respondents	200	120	40	40	400
Actual respondents	155	85	31	29	300
Response Rate (%)	75.5	70.8	71.5	72.5	75
Share of female (in %)	39.6	46.0	49.5	49.3	46.1
Share of male (in %)	60.4	54.0	55.5	50.7	53.9
Average age in years (standard deviation in bracket)	40.73 (17.68)	38.20 (16.09)	38.29 (14.12)	39.08 (12.56)	38.95 (15.44)
Share of respondents who completed University education (in %)	26.4	14.5	36.5	17.3	24.4
Share of respondents who are employed or self employed (in %)	37.6	43.5	55.0	62.7	48.6
Share of respondents who are married	23.4	17.0	23.6	7.4	19.0

Source: Field survey, 2007

Sustaining the role of marketing strategies has been a concern to political marketing scholars (Craven and Piercy, 2003). In order to establish how best to sustain the role of marketing strategies in politics, this study set for itself the objective of determining how to sustain the role of marketing strategies in politics with the following research question:

Research Question: *“How can the roles of marketing strategies in party politics be sustained?”*

In an attempt to answer this question, responses were sought from both the parties and electorate in the questionnaire. Tables 4.4 and 4.5 below summarize the responses in phase 1 (parties) and phase2 (electorate) respectively.

Table 4.4: Ways of Sustaining the Role of Marketing Strategies in Politics (Party Perspective).

	RESPONSES	LP (F)	CP F	FP F	NP (F)	Total	%
a.	Continuous political enlightenment	15	15	8	3	51	17
b.	Innovative politicians.	20	20	8	8	61	20
c.	Basic marketing training for the operators of the political system.	20	20	8	10	88	30
d.	Continuous use of marketing research and planning	25	25	15	15	98	33
	Total	150	80	35	33	298	100

Source: Field Survey, 2007.

KEY: LP= Leader Party – PDP; CP=Challenger Party – ANPP;

FP=Follower Party – AD; NP= Nicher Party – APGA.

Interpretation of result

Table 4.4 which contains the parties' responses on the ways of sustaining the role of marketing strategies in politics indicates the following:

- Continuous political enlightenment (17%)
- Innovative politicians (20%)
- Basic marketing for the operators of the political system (30%)
- Continuous use of marketing research and planning (33%)

From the result, it is crystal clear that a preponderance of the respondents believes that the roles of marketing strategies in politics can be sustained through:

- Basic Marketing Training for the operators of the political system
- Continuous use of marketing research and strategies

Table 4.5: Ways of Sustaining the Role of Marketing Strategies in Politics (Electorate Perspective)

	RESPONSES	ELP Freq.	ECP Freq.	EFP Freq.	ENP Freq.	Total	%
a.	Continuous political enlightenment	30	15	3	8	56	18.5
b.	Innovative politicians.	20	15	3	3	41	13.5
c.	Basic marketing training for the operators of the political system.	50	30	13	9	103	34.0
d.	Continuous use of marketing research and strategies	55	25	12	9	101	34.0

Total	155	85	31	29	300	100%
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Source: Field Survey, 2007.

Key: ELP= Electorate of Leader Party; ECP=Electorate of Challenger Party;
EFP=Electorate of Follower Party; ENP= Electorate of Nicher Party.

The result of the electorates' responses on the sustenance of the role of marketing strategies in politics indicates the following:

- Continuous political enlightenment (18.3%)
- Innovative politicians (13.4%)
- Basic marketing training for the operators of the political system (34%)
- Continuous use of marketing research and strategies (34.3%)

Discussion

A comparison of the results in the two phases with respect to the ways of sustaining the role of marketing strategies in politics indicates preponderance of opinion in the following areas:

- Continuous political enlightenment
- Basic marketing training for the operators of the political system
- Emergence of innovative politicians.
- Continuous use of marketing research and strategies

Conclusion

Based on the findings and in consonance with the objective of this research it is apparent that the roles of marketing in electoral politics are sustainable. But this requires deliberate steps on the part of political actors.

Policy implications of the findings

The findings of this research are important on several counts:

- Democracy is sweeping across the world, and the basic instrument (or institution) of democracy is political party. Hence the failure of political party is the failure of democracy. Sustaining the role of marketing strategies in party politics will

help politicians and parties to deepen democratic culture in Nigeria by adhering to best democratic practices.

- Wedded to the above is the fact that political parties in Nigeria and the world over constitute a powerful driving force for political development of the country. Yet, their operators do not appreciate the need to run the parties on the basis of marketing concept (i.e. being voter-focused rather than party centred). This makes it worthwhile and desirable for political actors to have basic marketing training to enhance their skills and performance.
- Political parties are becoming more organized in their marketing activities as the 2008 and 2009 presidential elections in USA and Ghana respectively indicated. To catch up with the trend, political parties in Nigeria need to commission marketing research and telemarketing campaigns that transcend constituency boundaries.
- Once the campaigns have been conducted, it is important to determine why the campaigns fared in the way that they did.(i.e. post election analysis) for improved performance in future.
- Party discipline and cohesion can be increased by restricting the capacity of members to switch allegiance to other party once elected.

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