The Influence of Political Advertising on the Voting Patterns of Rural Residents in Electoral Processes: A Study on the Role of Radio Campaigns

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Abstract. The study was conducted to determine the extent to which radio political campaign messages influence voters' behaviour during elections. The study also examined the influence of other political campaign techniques used by political parties to influence voters' decisions in their favour. The study determined whether frequent exposure to both pro and against candidates' radio political campaign messages influenced voters' decisions on election day and also investigated the extent of the influence of opinion leaders among voters during elections.

The study examined the descriptive survey; the sample population was 400 respondents who were residents in a random sampling technique in Lagos. The instrument used for the data analysis was frequency count and simple percentage. Findings from the study show that radio in Nigeria helps in political participation by motivating citizens to vote and be present for manifesto reading, unbiased in their choice of candidates, etc. It encourages people to attend rallies and be informed about the decision-making process, which is very important in the electoral process. In summary, this study sheds light on the impact of radio political campaign messages and other campaign techniques on voters' behaviour during elections. It underscores the importance of radio in promoting political participation, unbiased decision-making, and informed choices among voters. However, caution should be exercised to avoid negative influences such as sentimentalism, ethnic bias, and religious bigotry, which can undermine the integrity of the electoral process and harm society.

Keywords: Voters' behavior; Political campaign techniques; Decision-making; Radio political campaign messages; Political participation

INTRODUCTION

Modern-day politics demand that political parties serve as a platform through which politicians contest for different elective positions. And for these electorates to participate, author [1] observed that they (electorates) are mobilized to vote candidates into various offices. These mobilizations are done by producing and airing or publishing political campaign messages to educate and influence voters to act during the elections. The author [2] also observed that, as Nigerians conducted their 2019 general elections, such political communication in various campaign messages was witnessed. He asserts, "Radio, which is one of the most frequent mediums used by campaign organizers and political parties, witnessed such presence of political campaign messages even higher". Today, voters in Nigeria listen to and see various political campaign messages through listening to radio. The author [3] showed that Nigerians depend heavily on the radio as a significant public information source. With this development, authors [4] showed that most of the political parties sponsored one form of political advertising or the other, in order to bring to the attention of the voting public, the parties' 'political manifestoes as well as the parties' candidates for the various elective offices in the country. The essence of their campaign was to sell their parties and candidates.

Nigeria is a country that can be described as a nation where people are guided mainly by their ethnic affiliation and identity. This identity led to the proliferation of local media outfits, especially local radio stations. These local radio stations give all the various community leaders in the locality advantages by allowing them to speak to their ethnic community members or tribal members. This is one reason that makes local radio stations more patronized by the various community members. And this also allows community leaders to speak to their co-community members directly. The author [5] observed that radio programs are usually timely and capable of extending messages to the audience no matter where they may be as long as they have a receiver with an adequate power supply. The absence of such facilities as road, light and water is no hindrance to the radio.

Similarly, such obstacles as challenging topography, distance, time and socio-political exigencies do not hinder radio performance. He further observed that illiteracy is no barrier to radio messages since such statements can be passed in the audience's language. Extensive use of mass media as an effective communication tool is evident during political campaigns worldwide. It stands out as a political mobilization medium in different countries. Its coverage, diversity and change in social context have made it a social mobilization tool. Television, radio, newspapers, and posters are among the different forms of mass media that are primarily used in political mobilization during the election period worldwide [6, 7].

Politicians have adopted political advertising as a form of wooing their supporters. Political advertisement is done in return for supporting or opposing a candidate for election to public office [8]. The radio and mass media have been important pillars of the Nigerian democratic system. Specifically, they have played critical roles in the electoral process by acting as significant sources of information, providing essentially costless and reliable details, leading to a more balanced education and opinion formation among the voting public. Therefore, the connection between the politician and mass media should be contextualized from the perspective of the politician who wants to win an election, whether by hook or crook. In the process, they would work hard to capture the attention and interest of the audience that the mass media controls [3].

Radio is regarded as the most effective medium because it transcends the barrier of literacy and it covers a vast geographical region. Thus, when skillfully used, radio broadcasts have proven to be the most effective medium of communication with the population [9]. Radio promotes economic development, stimulates political participation and arouses national consciousness and unity. A radio station needs to be independent, free and responsible to the public so that awareness is created for the citizens to know the problems and issues confronting the state and their possible solutions and consequences [9], when it is time for elections in a country. Politicians or people running for a particular seat in politics use this form of mass disseminator to get people's interest and vote for them.

Radio is regarded as the most effective medium because it transcends the barrier of literacy and it covers a vast geographical region. Thus, when skilfully used, radio broadcasts have proven to be the most effective medium of communication with the population [9]. Radio promotes economic development, stimulates political participation and arouses national consciousness and unity. A radio station needs to be independent, free and responsible to the public to create awareness for the citizens to know the problems and issues confronting the state and their possible solutions and consequences [9]. Voting is a political behaviour of choice or preference based on the information available to the voter [2]. The media's plan is always to sway the mass's opinion on a particular issue to achieve a specific result. No difference is found in politics and the influence language of media reporting approach or attitude of report exert on voting behaviour. The influence of media on voters and their conviction towards any candidate as has been sold to them by the press produces leadership. Leadership has been a source of attraction, estimation, legend, and myth since the beginning of civilized societies. The Egyptians, for instance, had hieroglyphics for leadership, leader, and follower 5000 years ago. Both Plato and Aristotle were not exempted from this issue as they wrote about leadership, contemplating the requirements of the ideal leader in a perfect state. Many countries in the world, particularly in the continent of Africa, have experienced leadership ascendency through elections and some through coup d'état, and the country Nigeria is not an exception in her developmental stages since October 1, 1960, when she gained her independence. However, democratic

political development in Nigeria has taken a centre phase in recent times. This is affixed on the fact that since May 29, 1999, the country seems to have maintained a stable democratic dispensation. Nevertheless, one common feature of the recent wave is media reporting influence on voting behaviour and leadership ascendancy.

Statement of the Research Problems. Radio as a communication medium influences how people experience their political life by regularly broadcasting news material on current affairs, politics and other areas [7]. Radio is still the best way for political parties and candidates to influence people. The issue is whether the enormous political campaign messages by the parties, candidates, and other political institutions being aired on local radio have a bearing on creating and sustaining awareness of a party and/or its candidate(s) for election. Furthermore, it is a question to determine whether there is a relationship between radio political campaign messages, interference of the opinion leaders on the voters' behaviour leading to participating during the elections, and the outcome of the election result.

The objectives of this study are to:

1. To determine how radio political campaign messages influence voters' behaviour during elections.

2. To examine the influence of other political campaign techniques used by political parties to influence voters' decisions in their favour.

3. To determine whether frequent exposure to both pro and against candidates' radio political campaign messages influence voters' decisions on election day;

4. To investigate the extent of the influence of opinion leaders among voters during elections;

5. To examine the correlation between the influence of radio political campaign messages and the opinion leaders on the voters' behaviour and election outcomes.

Literature Review

Transistor radio was the premier information communication channel. It was used for several decades before other information communication channels were invented. Its existence could be dated back to the twentieth century. Resource [10] asserted that a transistor is a semiconductor device with at least these terminals per connection to an electric circuit. Tracing the historical development of radio from distribution system to radio diffusion or radio fusion and transistor radio dry cell battery was the only power source. Its radio batteries are very cheap and readily available even in the most remote areas of Nigeria. Still, now digital radio had replaced the transistor radio.

The power of information has taken over globally. Media, through telecommunications, are changing how information and culture function globally. This has brought the identity principle to the fore, where individuals, groups and communities can adequately express themselves without borders [11]. Political possibilities have risen from these technological developments. Radio, especially with television, reaches the poorest rural areas in Nigeria. According to [11] combining pictures and sounds affects viewers emotionally and intellectually; campaign jingles and billboards affect viewers emotionally and intellectually. It concurs with [12], who opines that the principle of the public sphere assumes freedom of speech and assembly, a free press and the right to freely participate in political debates and decision-making because when it has caused intellectual assimilation, one can then make a clear decision on what to do or join in. Mass media, which have become indispensable in Nigeria today, have functions which they perform according to [13] include

1) The surveillance of current events that are likely to affect citizens positively and even negatively;

2) Help to identify critical socio-political issues;

3) Provide a platform for advocacy for causes and interests;

4) Functions to transmit diverse contacts across the various dimensions and factions of political discourse;

5) Aid in the scrutiny of government officials and their institutions and other agencies.

These go a long way to influence people on public activities, events and even public policies in governance.

Media information often accompanies propaganda to influence the audience, especially in political campaigns and rallies. Propaganda, which comes from the Latin verb 'propagare', means to reproduce, spread or transmit, usually from one person to another. The propaganda literature can

be traced to Pope Gregory XV in 1622. At this time, propaganda was seen more as an object of faith dissemination or communication than an object of statecraft. In contemporary global relations, propaganda is seen as the deliberate effort by the government to influence the attitudes and behaviour of foreign populations or specific groups within those populations in the expectation that the affected groups could influence the attitudes and actions of their government.

Scholars on the issue of radio coverage of elections in Nigeria hold different views and opinions. According to [14], Nigerian radios do not correctly report elections as they exhibit deprived news verdicts as they say election events. They display high inefficiency in their attempt to differentiate between estimation and information, with gross negligence with facts handling and the ethics of reporting professionalism. The author [15], in agreement with Oboh & Hudson's view, adds that the deprived news verdict is caused by the radio ownership factor, which poses a destructive threat to radio coverage of elections and the strong development of democracy. The ownership factor, therefore, is a threat to professionalism and the healthy growth of democracy. The author further observes that the manner of the coverage underwrites the intensification or decrease of clashes by the way they collect, process, bundle and broadcast information to the public. Both authors conclude that effort should be made to make available channels and elements to provide an arena for the radio to realize the expected role in politics. The author [16] made another critical point by bringing to the fore that Nigerian reporters are sporadically obsessional and inconsiderate in their handling of political issues, consequently fetching some newsmen the wrath of the law. In like manner, authors [17] discussing the radio coverage of the election and the regulatory environment in Nigeria stress that Nigeria's constitution made provision of three legal apparatuses that control radio coverage of the election, including the Electoral Act, the Nigeria Broadcasting Code and the National Broadcasting Commission Act (NBC). They argue that these bodies provide a legal framework for election coverage. Still, the overlooked points include the inequality in the coverage opportunity given to radio houses, state-owned radio houses flouting rules of the range, and the incumbent power during elections influencing the press, consequently making radio coverage of elections and their reporting lopsided.

How a particular group of people vote during the election is known as voting behaviour. Voting behaviour means studying voter's devices, alternatives, programs and ideology. Voting behaviour also enables one to decide on running the government. Scholars like [18] have identified factors which determine voting behaviour to be:

Primary group influence: Where family and friends determine voting patterns, this involves face-to-face relationships.

Class factor: Has to do with occupation, income, educational status, and general style of living in Nigeria shows situations where the interest of the majority outwits the minority few. In Britain, the middle and upper class constitute less than 40% of the population aligned to the conservatives. The lower and working class are more inclined to the Labour Party. In the USA, class considerations are of less importance.

Religion: Voters tend to wield towards their religious groups. No party in Nigeria is tied to religious groups, but Muslims usually support their members just like Christians. In the US, Catholics and Jews are generally supporters of the Democratic Party.

Ethnicity: Contributes a lot to party affiliations, especially in multi-ethnic countries. Poverty has ravaged society today, especially in Nigeria, where a dollar goes for N478 (Naira). Politicians have come to influence poor voters with bags of rice, money, and other food items to get their votes. Furthermore, regionalism, ethnicity and class were not left out as they influenced the voting behaviour in Zimbabwe's election of 2008. Most citizens voted for a particular candidate because he is his relative. Others voted for candidates they felt would represent them as civil servants; others voted for their candidate because they thought they were ruling class members and should maintain someone who would protect their interests.

Authors [19] observed that gender bias and facial inferences influence voting behaviour. The research concludes that in most cases, people use shallow decision heuristics like the impression of competence made solely from the facial appearance when deciding on a candidate to vote for. In his view, voters who care about policy topics would always require masculine leadership and prefer male leaders. In contrast, they are more likely to vote for women when they care about issues that need a feminine leadership style. This

is because roles requiring the ability to direct and control people are often regarded as masculine. After all, it is generally believed that men are more potent than women. Also, when people feel they need a leader who will effectively play roles like interpersonal sensitivity, they will likely vote for a woman because it is believed that women are more sensitive than men regarding interpersonal issues. In essence, emotions and feelings shape voting behaviour.

Social networking sites are acting as an excellent medium for view mobilization. Authors [20] discovered that the relative volume of tweets mirrored the result of the German federal elections. The study found that young people get political information from social radio. Thus, social radio and other online tools significantly shape public opinion and set political agendas.

Empirical Review

One of the most essential features of democracy is the chance for every eligible citizen to choose a candidate to run the affairs of the state. Electoral ideas have developed alongside the democratic ideal, though it has had a turbulent time attracting general acceptability in human society. In its development, the granting of a franchise was first to a small privileged group in the community, usually based on the membership of an estate. It was gradually extended to possessions of property. Age restriction and even sex discrimination also existed, but the latter has been abolished in all democratic societies. However, the age restriction is still in most democracies. Only eighteen citizens can vote in some countries like Nigeria and the USA, while others have fixed theirs at twenty or twenty-one years. The election is believed to serve several purposes in a democracy. Apart from the equal chance to participate in politics, it is used to gauge a society's or government's political health by serving as a stamp of legitimacy for the government of the day. At the same time, election acts as checks on the government since the elected are aware that they may not be re-elected for another term unless they fulfil their electoral promises to satisfy the electorate who gave their mandate. Election is both a process of changing governments and making governments alive to their responsibility. It means bringing the periphery into the political arena [21]. The election is seen as providing a peaceful change of government. It also allows social groups to resolve their conflicting needs

peacefully. Voters are considered to be rational and intelligent in their choice of candidates. However, an opposing view sees elections as merely =symbolic 'in character. According to this position, elections are a secular ritual of democracy [22].

The struggle for a solution to the problem of ethnicity thus remains continuous. Unfortunately, the Marxist-developed and less developed states and the liberal-designed and less developed states have not solved their race problem. None has been able to come up with an empirical and enduring solution to ethnic issues in their countries, which would serve as a universal model for others.

This view opposes the one which holds that voters are intelligent and informed about their choice of candidates and that they vote to fulfil their civic duty. Voters are advised that nothing about the candidates is irrelevant to governance. Our concern in this paper is to examine the electoral behaviour of the Nigerian electorate using ethnicity. In essence, our interest is in mapping out the voting patterns and to see to what extent such practices are directed by race. Ethnic electoral behaviour in Nigeria is as old as elections in Nigeria itself. Various writers have identified this trend in Nigeria's elections or politics.

METHOD

"Research methods" refers to the organized processes, strategies, and equipment researchers employ to gather and process data to provide new insights and understandings about a specific event or subject. The design of this study is a descriptive study to examine necessary information on the effect of poverty on the educational development of citizens.

The study area considered for the study is Lagos State of Nigeria. The Lagos States are appropriate for this study because they are among Nigeria's earliest politically civilized and vibrant states.

The population of this study consists of all residents of Lagos state. Author [23] remarked that a sample is a smaller group to be drawn out of the population. He reported that it must be removed so that every member of the population has a specific non-zero probability of being included in the sample. Simple random sampling will be used to select 400 respondents from Lagos state.

The instrument used for this research work is a self-designed questionnaire tagged effect of poverty on the educational development of the citizens. Therefore, the questionnaire will be designed with a series of questions itemized containing facts about related issues in this research work.

The questionnaire was submitted to the researcher's supervisor to examine and correct the tool and evaluate whether the agency will adequately measure what it should. Necessary modifications were made, and inappropriate items in the agency were modified or scrapped, after which face and content validity of the instrument was ensured.

A test-retest method was adopted to ensure the reliability of the instrument. The questionnaire was administered to twenty National Open University of Nigeria students. The subject's responses will be obtained and correlated using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Analysis for the split-half method of testing the reliability.

The researcher went to the respondents personally to distribute questionnaires to them. The completed copies of the instrument were retrieved from the subjects after one week.

The data collected will be analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Frequency and percentage counts will be used to answer the research questions raised. Regression will be used to test the hypothesis at a 0.05 significance level.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic distribution of respondents according to gender shows that 32 (64.0%) of the respondents are male, while 18 (36.0%) are female (Table 1).

Table 1 – Descriptive Analysis of respondents' Demographic variables

Demographic variables	Grouping	Frequency	%
Gender	Male	32	64.0
	Female	18	36.0
Years of Experience	20-30 years	14	28.0
	31-40 years	29	58.0
	Above 45 years	7	14.0
Occupation	Civil Servant	19	38.0
	Self Employed	31	62.0

Distribution according to years of experience shows that 14 (28.0%) of the respondents have 20-30 years of experience, and 29 (58.0%) have 31-40 years of experience. In comparison, 7 (14.0%) respondents have over 45 years of experience. The table also shows that 19(38.0%) respondents are civil servants, while 31 (62.0%) are self-employed.

Table 2 – The data computation of the respondents' responses to the questionnaire administered to them

Parameters	Frequency	%
Participants listening to the radio		
Yes, every day	342	85.5
Yes, every week	17	4.5
Yes, once a month	11	4.3
Now and then	23	5.8
Very rarely	5	1.3
No answer	2	0.5
Total	400	100
Participants' choice between local and national radio stations		
Local radios	361	90.3
National radios	31	7.8
No answer	8	2.0
Total	400	100
Do participants listen to campaign messages		
Yes	360	90.0
No	37	9.3
No answer	3	0.8
Total	400	100
Type of campaigns participants mostly listen to		
Party related campaigns	233	58.3
Other campaigns	150	37.5
No answer	17	4.3
Total	400	100
Factors affecting political decision of respondents during voting		
Religious leaders	228	57.0
Tribal/ethnic leaders	57	14.3
Trade leaders/associations	21	5.3
Party leaders	42	10.5
Traditional leaders	10	2.5
Others	38	9.5
No answer	4	1.0
Total	400	100
How opinion leaders influenced electorates' voting decision		
They hardly influence my voting decision	11	2.8
They don't influence me in any way	17	4.3
Through their interpretations and commentaries about political development during sermons and other preaching sessions	255	63.8

Parameters	Frequency	%
In all my voting decision	35	8.8
Well in a positive way of course, because it gives the right direction and counseling to the masses	18	4.5
No answer	64	16.0
Total	400	100
Whether or not opinion leaders influence listening to campaigns		
Yes	262	65.5
No	125	31.3
No answer	13	3.2
Total	400	100

3) The success rate achieved through radio adverts by politicians and political parties supersedes other media

4) Mobilizing electorates in general elections would have been impossible without radio.

5) Radio stations organized programs that improved voters' turnout in the 2015 general elections.

Having gathered that political campaign messages exert a powerful influence on society and especially on the voting behaviour of electorates, the researcher recommends that producers of political campaign messages should use their proper judgment in packaging their messages to avoid deception on voters. Such messages should be packaged so that if followed by the masses, they would not harm any individual or society. Furthermore, opinion leaders who are equally found to exert a considerable influence on the opinion followers through interpretation of the political campaign messages should always check the reality or otherwise of the messages produced by parties and candidates to avoid misleading their followers. They should also try to prevent sentimentalism, ethnicity and religious bigotries in their quest to hold on to the followers' decision-making during elections, as that could negatively affect society.

CONCLUSIONS

Radio in Nigeria helps in political participation by motivating citizens to vote and be present for manifesto reading, unbiased in their choice of candidates, etc. It encourages people to attend rallies and be informed about the decision-making process, which is very important in the electoral process. It can also be further concluded that:

1) Election turnout can be directed towards proper radio announcements and mobilizations

2) Threats of incarceration and proscription also affect the effective mobilization of electorates by radio stations

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