

**ADVERTISING AND PUBLIC RELATIONS IN POLITICAL MARKETING IN NIGERIA;  
COMPLEMENTARY ROLE**

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**Abstract:**

*This study has the objective of highlighting the complementary role of advertising and public relations in political marketing in Nigeria as cardinal for political marketing service delivery. It is a survey research based study, hence involved the use of copies of structured questionnaire administered one hundred and nine (109) senatorial districts in Nigeria at 5 (five) per district, across 18 (eighteen) major registered political parties. Samples were drawn based on the convenient and judgemental sampling techniques. Opinions expressed by respondents were scaled using the modified Likert ranking scale. Hypotheses were tested and analyzed using the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) Statistical tool. Findings show that advertising messages in content, contest and structure have positive influence on political parties' market offer acceptance in Nigeria; it also shows that public relations activities create and sustain positive and significant relationship with political parties' advertising as basis for influencing voters' behaviour. However, the principles of public relations are poorly integrated for expected functional publicity that aid the marketing of the political parties' candidates, programmes, events and ideologies, hence expected synergy between advertising and public relations is poor. Recommended are efficiency in political parties' projection based on the adoption of the services of good quality party personnel in calls, talk shops and website inquiries and management; the need for good quality parties membership acquisition and retention campaign and plans; improvement in parties' differential positioning strategies for electorates' acceptance; good quality personal interact between political parties leadership and the electorates with background public relations events for improved positive gossips and for referral activities in favour of the political parties.*

**keywords:** Political marketing, Advertising, Public relations, Functional publicity and Personnel audit

**Introduction:**

Advertising and public relations are basic campaign tools in political marketing among most political parties in most nations of the globe, Nigeria inclusive. Preliminary studies on the acceptance rate and cost implication of these tools show that advertising is more in use compared to public relations in Nigeria. This inclination on to the adoption of advertising has actually not yielded expected acceptance of political parties, hence the adoption of extra costs involving tools of thuggery, violence, vanderlization, bribery, manipulations and falsifications of documents; excess influence on judiciary processes and cumulative long term litigations

and consequent cost.

Given this, this study is aimed at comparing the costs and benefits associated with the adoption of either of these tools with the other as compliment, for the purpose of advocating for adjustments in these tools' combination ratio.

### **Background Issues:**

Political marketing like consumer related marketing is made up of activities at the individual and or organizational level that are designed to facilitate and expedite exchange for goal accomplishment through the satisfaction of target markets' needs- Agbonifoh, Ogwo, Nnolim & Nkamnebe (2007). It is based on exchange between persons natural and or artificial (individuals and political parties), hence needs and the target that the political parties may gain acceptance and loyalty-Berkowitz, Kerin, Hartley.& Rudelius (2000).

Political marketing based on political parties in Nigeria like most other nations has the buyers and sellers as the target market (voters) and the political parties respectively. To earn acceptance, the political parties make offer as party image/personality based on good quality consumer behaviour analysis (research), market segmentation and product image/brand optimization principles and product positioning strategies-kotler (2019), Agbonifoh, Ogwo, Nnolim & Nkamnebe (2007) and Oko (2016).

In the developed economies of the globe, political parties as part of marketing activities adopt the tools of marketing research, media and advertising analysis, multiple regression, inferential analysis, factor analysis, discriminant analysis, conjoint measurement and multidimensional scaling among others-Kotler (2010) of candidates and political party personnel. This is however as a result of and in response to the growth and development of political parties, political products and level of target market awareness and development. Political marketing in these economies is practiced based on marketing concept and philosophies, social responsibility and or societal marketing concepts unlike in Nigeria-Berkowitz, Kerin, Hartley & Rudelius (2000), where it is either selling or product concept oriented.

On account of this poor level of development of political marketing in Nigeria, the tool of advertising as an instrument of promotion is principally adopted rather than public relations or a balanced combination of both.

### **Advertising:**

Advertising based on the use of the print, electronic, posters and bill board media of classified as technical and general and non-standard is adopted to gain and sustain the attention of the electorates for expected acceptance and loyalty.

All forms of advertising based on preliminary research on this study took above 60% of the total promotion expenditure established at 5% of promotion expenditure. Other forms of communication accounted for 35% promotion budgeted expenditure.

Advertising as a paid form of non-personal presentation (communication) about the political party/ its projects, candidates or ideas is sponsored by a person identified-AMA, (1965), is built on cardinal principles of control, speed, responsibility and reasonability of cost-Oko (2002), Political parties adopt advertising tool in a bid to reaching large and unstructured publics as it affords the parties the ability to manage and control the advert timing, place, mode, emphases, phrases, contents and contents -Oko (2002).

The quality of control of the variables of advertising forms the bases on which the political parties image and pride are built, especially as the messages and their contents are made simple and believable, hence are considered audience motivational-Oko, (2002). Political parties in Nigeria host attractive and interesting

adverts that woo the audience, however these adverts offer little or no target market benefits even when the messages are visible, readable and audible- Oko (2002). The effectiveness of advertising among political parties in Nigeria is anchored on the ability to select media that meet and influence the needs of the target audiences especially voters, hence is made precise and concise in the language associated with the sources of the advert as political parties and electioneering candidates. The timeliness of advert is vital for maximum advantage. The colour effects and designs of presentations are made goal oriented, however the parties and their candidates' offers are not often widely accepted, hence the expected effectiveness measured by the adverts' positive influence on the political parties and their candidates is abysmally low.

The actualization of the hallmark of advert among most political parties and their candidates which is the presentation of information concerning defined market offer, to arouse interest, build desire and get defined publics in favourable frame of mind to accept and be loyal to the political parties have always met with challenges. These challenges called for the adoption of alternative strategies of thuggery, violence, vanderlizations, falsification of documents including photo shopping, bribery among others.

The present poor level of acceptance of political parties' market and marketing offer based on advertising in Nigeria can only be improved on based on good advertising and product positioning in terms of the personalities behind the adverts as political parties and party candidates and target audience as general and specific target markets as well as the right tone of appeal in favourable media- Oko (2002). This is achievable given proper alignment of advertising with public relations services.

#### **Public Relations:**

Political parties in Nigeria adopt the tool of public relations as an intra clement of promotion in political parties' market and marketing offer presentation. This however is poorly noticed based on the low level of investment in public relations.

Public relations is all encompassing as it is a summation of all business functions aimed at presenting an organization (inclusive of political parties) for public acceptance Oko (2002 and 2012). It involves doing the right thing at the right time and for the benefit of the right persons (publics) in an honest and sincere manner and being able to communicate with the publics, the essence of the corporate (political parties) actions for better understanding. It is a state of mind and attitude towards the member(s) of the public who come in contact with the business outfit, inclusive of the - political parties-Oko (2002 and 2012)..

Public relations is explained as a professional exercise involving the identification of various publics relevant to the survival and growth of an organization (political parties inclusive), monitoring the publics' opinions, analyzing these opinions and designing and sending out appropriate communications to ensure mutual understanding and goodwill-Ibekwe (1984) and Oko (2012).

Political parties inclusive of those in Nigeria adopt the tool of public relations for growth through publics satisfaction and acceptance given the execution of the functions of:

- Ascertaining and evaluating specific and or general publics' opinions as they relate to the political parties,
- Counseling the executive members of the political parties on the ways of dealing with publics' opinion as they exist,
- Adoption of various communication tools and techniques to influence the publics opinions, and
- Devising and implementing programs that are aimed at gaining favourable interpretation of political parties' policies programmes and activities as well as operations for the appreciation of interested members of the publics-Oko (2012).

Based on the principles of market segmentation, public relations is adopted in the identification of the different publics of the political parties which often include the general public, employees of political parties, consumers (electorates/voters), political party members, stakeholders, media, opposition parties, labour unions, communities, finances among others

Political parties with the use of events marketing activities such as exhibition, face-to-face conversion/

speech, , documentary /films; direct mails, sports, sponsorships, awards/ ceremonies; - breakfast meetings, luncheons, gift items among others in line with marketing concept are able to galvanize the media for favourable (functional) publicity Oko (2012), in form of news story editorial, project announcement and other forms of non-conventional communication especially those built on word-of-mouth communications. This publicity that spreads as wildfire is often at no cost to the political parties-Berkowitz, Kerin, Hartley & Rudelius (2002).

#### **Advertising, Public Relations Complement:**

Public relations as organizational function aimed at creating acceptable public images for the political parties draws support from advertising. Advertising as planned is expected to create in members of the public - specific and general, the opinion that the sponsor-the political party, is not only interested in gaining public acceptance and loyalty through votes cast but interested also in the welfare of the electorates-Oko (2002). Advert messages must highlight names and reputation of sponsors as means to maximizing and optimizing associated benefits considering the costs

It is expected that political parties' advertisement like those of consumer goods marketing should compliment public relations efforts thus should embody information about the political party, its challenges, strengths and opportunities given the candidates and party in policies. Where adverts do not complement public relations objectives, the efforts are considered waste, as benefits are sub-optimized; hence creates rooms for other political parties to exploit the target market for advantage.

Political parties' adverts should create positive effects beyond the immediate environment, thus should be designed to market political parties' other marketing offer at the same period as such should be planned on the basis of creating alignment with the role of public relations –Oko (2002).

#### **Public Relations and Political Party Acceptance and Loyalty**

Political parties introduce policies and candidates for elective positions for public appreciation, acceptance and show of loyalty. These candidates as offered the public by political parties, in the advanced economies are subjected to social profitability analysis as the benefits and costs associated with fielding the candidates as implicitly and explicitly are considered. This consideration is the hub of the party primaries.

Candidates' are presented as market offer based on the manipulation of selected intra elements of promotion with advertising as principal. These candidates and their political parties, mature and eventually wane (decline) in acceptance Oko (2002).

Adjustments in the combination of the intra-elements of promotion has the ability of expanding and enhancing the acceptance rate of the declining image and personality of candidates, especially where public relations - activities are appropriately employed given the right time, place, person, purpose and principles-Oko (2002).

The publicity generated based on appropriate public relations activities has the capacity of fanning life into the acceptance rate of political parties and their candidates. Given this, political parties adopt the tool of public relations as complement to advertising.

#### **Political Marketing-Voters (Consumer) Behaviours:**

The process of influencing consumers for purchases as consumer behaviour based study is the same as securing voters' patronage and loyalty. Both the consumers and voters as individuals source and receive information, process the information for pre-disposition to respond, and finally respond toward the product and or political party (candidates) as market offer-Shama (1975). Based on this assertion, the generally accepted mode or frame work of consumer behaviour is applicable in the analysis of voters' behaviour. On this account, the study by Haward & Sheth (1969) as cited by Shama (1975) is adopted in the analysis of the political party target market advertising and public relations positioning for political party market offer

acceptance and subsequent loyalty. These include:

- Stimulus input variables which originate from the candidate and the party that are targeted at the general and or specific (defined) market as voters. This stimulus is made up of the candidates' personality, tailored around the image of the political party.
- Environmental influences on the target market as voters. These influences are internal and external. Internal revolves around the voters' (target markets) pre-dispositions. - These are vital for processing decision values which are subject to the target markets' learning and selective screening.
- Output variables. These relate to the decision to or not to accept the market offer as candidates and or political parties as bases for loyalty as is built on vote casting.
- Feedback processes-Shama (1975).

Voters' behaviour (basis for accepting or otherwise of political party and or candidates) is also influenced by the socio-economic status and psychological makeup of the target market-Lazarsfeld; Bercelson & Godel (1948) and Campbell, Converse, Miller & Stokes (1966). Lane (1965) proffered a model of consumer (voter) decision making process with highlights as: stimulus, organism and response. These are highlighted thus:

- The stimulus is described as symbols which are transmitted to the consumer as political party/ candidates' social environment made up of the community of aboard, media base of information transmission; family; ethnic groups, social class and other relevant (marketing) agents of social contact about the political market offer as product.
- The organism refers to the political party target markets (voters) that receive provided stimuli, screen the stimuli through perceptual and attitudinal screens as basis to reaching pre-dispositions to responding towards the candidate and political party as market offer.
- Responses refer to and include actions of voting for and accepting or not of the candidate and or political party as offered. It involves expression of opinion concerning the offer political party/ candidate, reading and listening to messages concerning the attitudinal object as the political party/ candidate.

Given these highlights, it is discerned that consumer behaviour for tangible and intangible products (goods and services) as marketing/market offer and that of voters for political parties and candidates is based on the same approaches. This accounts for why the offer of political parties and candidates to the general or specific publics target market using the promotional tools of advertising and public relations must be built on consumer behaviour models.

### **Objective of the Study:**

The study is aimed at highlighting the place of Public Relations as complementary to advertising in political marketing in Nigeria.

Subsidiary objectives include:

- i. To determine the level of acceptance of political parties' market and marketing offer based on advertising messages in political marketing in Nigeria
- ii. To assess the contribution of public relationship (in the generation of publicity) as complement to advertising in political marketing, in Nigeria

### **Research Hypotheses:**

This study is anchored on these (2) two hypotheses:

- H<sub>01</sub>:** advertising messages do not significantly influence the acceptance of political parties' market offer in political marketing in Nigeria.
- H<sub>02</sub>:** public relations activities do not complement advertising significantly in political marketing in Nigeria.

### **Research Methodology:**

This study is survey research method based; hence data were sourced using the closed and structured questionnaire. Hypotheses as projected in the study were tested and analyzed using Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) statistical model:

Sample elements as were drawn based on the convenient and judgemental sampling techniques were scaled using the 5 (five) point likert ranking scale. These data as scaled were based on 5 (five) of the (eighteen) major registered political parties in operation in Nigeria as at February 2023. A total of 109 (one hundred and nine) senatorial districts *were* considered inclusive of the Federal Capital Territory as population of the study. Copies of structural questionnaire were distributed at 5(five) per senatorial district per political party, hence at total of two thousand seven hundred and twenty five (2725) copies of questionnaire were distributed, out of this number, 2506 (two thousand five hundred and six or 91.96%) were retrieved, 2496 (two thousand four hundred and ninety six, or 91.59%) were considered valid. These valid copies of questionnaire were considered usable for analysis and subsequent opinion building; respondents were all drawn from the media and publicity team of the political parties as knowledgeable to provided needed information.

#### **Analysis of Hypotheses:**

The two (2) hypotheses projected for this study were tested and analyzed thus:

##### **Hypothesis 1:**

Based on the model summary, it is discerned that the variables of advertising messages in content, context and structure (across political parties in Nigeria) influenced at 51 .45%, the acceptance of political parties in marketing offer of the electoral office candidates, policies and programmes while the remaining 48.55% are traceable to extraneous factors not accommodated in the model. The adjusted R-square (0.611) as value close to R-square (0.668), suggests that where the model is sampled from the population as the entire registered political parties and all details of political parties' structures instead of the sample, the differential result will *be* negligible at 0.009% variance. On account of this, the model fitness is considered good and acceptable. At  $R = 0.813$ , it shows that advertising messages in content, context and structure influence the acceptance of Nigeria political parties' market and marketing offers, at a fairly high correlation co-efficient greater than 0.05 but significantly lower than 1.

The ANOVA results for regression co-efficient indicates that the significance of the  $f=85.275 > f$ -table = 3.85 at a degree of freedom (2, 85), ie  $p$ -value = 0.00 is less than 0.05 at 95% confidence level.

The test shows the advertising message has the least beta ( $\beta = 0.216$ ) showing that advertising has positive influence on political parties' market offer acceptance in Nigeria though at a low rate; thus 21.6% increase in acceptance of the market offer, is caused by increase in efficiency in the advertisement of political parties' market offer. It is further discerned from the constant of regression, that if advertising in content, context and structure is zero (0), the acceptance of political parties' market offer is estimated at 26.4%; that is significant at a 5% level. Given this, it could be concluded that advertising can be used to influence the acceptance of political parties' market offer. Based on this, the study rejects the null hypotheses, and accepts the alternative that states that advertising messages significantly influence the acceptance of political parties' market offer in political marketing in Nigeria.

##### **Hypothesis II:**

This measures the degree to which public relations in context, content and structure complements advertising in the marketing of political parties' offering in terms of candidates for elective offices, parties' policies and programmes. The test shows that the activities of Public relations create and sustain positive and significant relationship with political parties advertising in structuring voters' (consumers') behaviour and decision making process activities of stimulus input variables evaluation; environmental influences assessment; processing structures and environmental information for reaching

voting pre-disposition, output and feedback process-Haward & Sheth (1969), as basis for political parties' acceptance and loyalty. This is at correlation co-efficient of 0.2368, 0.57088, 0.0198, 0.2418, 0.268 and p value of 0.000; 0.000; 0.0000; 0.000; and 0.000

This implies that public relations activities compliment political parties advertising activities in parties' market offer acceptance and loyalty. The nine efficient public relations activities are integrated into political parties' communication and media function; the more parties create and sustain publicity as functional output of relationship marketing.

Based on this analysis, good quality integration of public relations activities into advertising will aid political parties organize and structure; place; position and reposition market offer in terms of candidates; policies, projects and programmes for enhanced acceptance in the face of intense competition for loyalty in political field in Nigeria. This is given the ability of the combination of advertising and public relations to stimulate awareness, create interest, arouse desire and ensure action of voting for and loyalty to political parties, hence the null hypothesis is rejected and alternative that states that public relations activities complement advertising significantly in political party marketing in Nigeria.

#### **Discussion of Findings:**

The results of the analyses of the study show that advertising messages in content, context and structure influence the acceptance of Nigeria political parties' market and marketing offer at 51.45% index on a 100% scale with the least beta ( $\beta = 0.216$ ). This though considered significant, is low compared to situation in the developed and other developing economies of the globe such as UK, Canada and Ghana respectively. This is worst given that Nigeria is considered a leading nation among the developing economies of the world politically

Further research on this shows that the situation of poor performance of advertising in political marketing in Nigeria is traced to the fact:

That people who offer themselves for elective positions amongst the political parties as subject of advertising do not subject themselves to self (assessment) analysis as job seekers neither do political parties get involved in personality audit. Personality audit is critical and involves examining oneself on some dimensions such as interests, ability(ies), education, personal goal, desire to achieve, amongst others, which must be in congruence with the target markets expectations. Based on this, the political parties in Nigeria are deficient in market offer attributes optimization and possible unique selling propositions projected concerning the political parties as artificial beings and the candidates do not meet the attention, interest and desire of the market for possible action of party and voters acceptance and loyalty -Kraner (1988), Deutschmorn (1990) and Richerson (1993).

Political parties in Nigeria consider the entire voters' market as homogeneous, hence the different characteristics, traits and interests that differentiate social -cultural groups especially along ethnic groups are not considered in political advertising. This accounts for the low rate of appreciation of political adverts in content, context and structure. Voters (electorates) especially in the Southern and North Central Nigeria given relative higher level of enlightenment are interested in economic efficiencies of administrative structures, thus are keen at determining the time car-marked for projects and skills associated with candidates rather than naming of candidates and projects only. Project choice for the politically enlightened people is based on good quality social benefit analysis in the current and future period; hence parties are expected to brand themselves and associated market offer accordingly. Political parties' services are not considered a reflection of the qualities observed in the personified parties leadership in Nigeria-Tarter (2002) and Oko (2014) and most political parties' leadership personified are considered obsolete and market liabilities rather than assets.

In the area of public relations and associated activities, the political structures in Nigeria are not built with emphasis on long term relationship creation and sustenance or do they experience increased awareness of the need for self regulations. Hence the desire to develop new methods that offer solution to inter and intra parties' conflicts is poor, the communication efforts are not tailored at gaining target market confidence and internal regulatory mechanisms are poorly managed.

Poor personality audit exercise that exist amongst political parties in Nigeria accounts for political parties leadership inconsistencies in behaviour especially with voters target market as focus. To gain acceptance among the electorates for these projected candidate's calls for violence and other vices as common during elections-Belk (1998) and Berkowitz, Kerin, Hartely & Rudelius (2002). The common personality characteristics of political parties' show more of candidates' ideal self rather than actual person as known by the electorates. Given this political parties products organization, placement, positioning and repositioning exercises as candidates focused is based on faulty foundation that breed crises.

These defects contribute jointly to the disharmony in the expected synergy between advertising and public relations in political marketing in Nigeria, hence the experienced dysfunctional rather than functional publicity commonly created for and among leading political parties in Nigeria.

#### **Conclusion:**

Political parties' market offer acceptances and loyalty(ies) are secured more based on the manipulation of the elements of public relations than advertising as understanding of the offer in content, context and structure that form bases for future patronage; hence public relations must in synergy, be employed with advertising at political market offer introductory platform, with pioneering (informational) competitive (comparative) and remaindering sub-functions.

#### **Recommendations:**

The following, as recommendations are fall outs of this study.

Political (parties) marketing activities among political parties in Nigeria with bias for offer communication should feature top personnel of the parties in the management of calls, talk shops, website inquiries, especially those considered capable of managing human dynamisms of attitude. The personnel must be those chosen based on resume evaluation, that shows what the personnel are like and what they can offer. The resume should show personnel's identification (name, address and phone numbers), possible positions sought for and are being occupied, educational background, extra-curricular activities of delight, experience and history, skills or capabilities as related to area of accomplishments or achievements as personal interest as well as good list of references.

These personnel as political party spoke persons are expected to progressively disclose the political parties' portfolio, based on good quality membership acquisition and retention campaign and plan. Relationship Managers ought to be appointed at political parties' touch points.

Based on this, the political party and her market offer as service based, are head-to-head or differentiated and service positioned before the electorates for acceptance and subsequent functional publicity generation.

Political parties in Nigeria need to win over voters and membership from other parties as competitors. This is achieved based on personal interaction especially given the input of public relations. Based on this, personal and public relations activities should be built to inspire positive gossips about the political parties, as voters as well as inter- and -intra party membership is encouraged. This often aids members highlight the positive attributes of the party and election candidates as target market offer.

Members of the parties who have distinguished themselves in different sectors of life and careers recognized. This forms bases of spreading positive stories about and concerning the party and membership for functional



publicity. Based on this, satisfied members of the political parties target market as well as party members as consolidated serve as referrals.

Political party(ies) market offer communication is a specialized field of political marketing. The market offer as candidates, policies, projects, programmes, structures among others. are described as core and are clearly and precisely presented. in compelling manner for political parties target market appreciation. It is the ability to create understanding of the offer rather than awareness that secures acceptance and loyalty,

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