

Political Marketing and Nigeria Electioneering: A Review of 2015 and 2019 General Election

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ABSTRACT

Political marketing has taken the centre stage in Nigeria since the return to civilian rule in 1999. Political marketing flourishes more in democratic governance than any other system of governance in the world today. The objective of this paper was to review the role of political marketing in the 2015 and 2019 general elections in Nigeria which ushered in a new government from an opposition political party for the first time since the return to civil rule in 1999. Findings from the study revealed that political marketing played a vital role in ousting the incumbent president of the People's Democratic Party. It was also revealed that the mass media, the internet and all social media platforms had a significant impact on the political marketing, while noting that negative marketing was largely used in the 2015 and 2019 general elections. It was therefore recommended that political marketing for electioneering campaigns should be issue based. Issue based campaign will address the myriad of problems that faces the country. In the long run the Nigerian populace will be the ultimate beneficiary of political marketing as it will help to shape the political system and address the problems of the nation.

Keyword: Politics, Marketing, Political marketing, 2015 and 2019 General Elections, Nigeria

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1. INTRODUCTION

Globally, there are different systems of governance adopted by countries to govern themselves. These systems of governance are in the form of oligarchy, aristocracy, monarchy or democracy. Democracy is a system of governance where citizens elect their representative at the federal, states and local government level. Democracy being a representative government allows the political office seekers to solicit for votes from the citizens. Agu (2015) asserted that democracy has been in practice since ancient time. Democracy is a contested but not a given concept (Adagbabiri & Okolie, 2019:7). Democracy is not without its own peculiar problems, one of such is the problem of leadership.

Electing candidates for political position has increased the demand for marketing instruments especially in a democratic setting where each individual and their sponsors (political parties) engage in cutting edge competition to win the minds of the electorate both at the conduct of the party's primary elections and the general elections. Communicating the plans of the contestants to the voting public involves one marketing concept or another. As noted by Sofyan (2015), political marketing is an amalgamation of marketing and politics. The impact of political marketing cannot be undermined in a democratic setting. All political office seekers must be able to sell themselves to those they want to represent (Denovan, 2012). Those seeking to represent their constituencies at whatever level are products that need to be marketed and doing this successfully requires the marketing strategies just like marketing a physical product.

Political marketing is viewed as multi-disciplinary as it is seen from the standpoint of both micro and macro analysis (Cwalina, Falkowski & Newman, 2012). Significant progress has been made in research in political marketing as shown in special issues of International Marketing Journals, journal of political marketing, handbooks, conferences and articles in leading field journals which has drawn the attention of students, researchers, professional practitioners and people from multiple background and has built a literature of considerable scales and values (Butler & Harris, 2009). The scope of political marketing has continued to expand as more researches are conducted. In their works of Levy (2002), Hunt (1976), Kotler (1972), Kotler and Zaltman (1971), Kotler and Levy (1969), opined that the scope of marketing is wider and can be extended to none products like marketing of persons and ideas and as such can be extend to the field of politics.

The selling point in political marketing is all about the benefits that will accrue to the society if a particular individual is accepted and voted into power. It is all about what a political office seeker will do to engender prosperity in the community. In a democratic setting just like ours, no candidate wins an election without one of form marketing or the order. Political marketing is art of passing information about a candidate and the platform to which the candidate belong in order to make the candidate acceptable to the general public. Newman (2008) stated that political marketing have adopted concepts and theories used in business by profit and non-profit organisations in selling ideas, goods and services to their audience and consumers and customers.

Democracy as a system of rule in recent times has increased political participation among the citizens. Electioneering campaigns ushers in opportunities for political marketing to thrive. Strohmeier (2013), electioneering campaigns alters voting behaviours and determines the success or failure of an election. To win election in a democratic system of government the place of marketing in politics cannot be jettisoned (Ghiuja, 2013; Aghara, Nwaizugbo, Chukwuemeka & Onyeizugbe, 2015). There is a growing use of marketing tools, concepts and strategies in political activities. However, as positioned by Henneberg (2004), there are growing concerns for advocate of political marketing to defend the use of marketing instruments in political activities. Sofyan, (2015) contended that the use of political marketing by political actors and interest groups justifies its adoption as a branch of marketing. Parties to an election are majorly concerned about electoral victories, the combination of marketing and politics to achieve these goals have remained inevitable. The goal of politics just like marketing is to have a larger size of the market (voters). Identifying the need of the people and meeting and surpassing these needs at a profit are all about marketing (Durmaz & Direkci, 2015).

1.1 Statement of Problem

Democracy been a government of the people, by the people and for the people has brought the importance of political marketing to the fore. Marketing and politics have been inseparable since both are aimed at holding, attracting and sustaining (voters and customers) to their products and brands (Agbara, Nwaizugbo, Chukwuemeka & Onyeizugbe, 2015). The whole essence of political marketing is to provide the electorate with information about the programmes and policies a political party will effect if elected into office at the federal, states and local government. However, this is not the case in Nigeria where political market is not issue based. Candidates are the political brands of their respective political parties. The question at this juncture is, why political brand consumers (electorate) align themselves with a particular political party while others change their political brand in terms of party affiliation. Going by the words of Boyd (1986), this is necessitated by the way people perceive parties leaders, the ideologies and policies of the party and the party itself.

1.2 Objectives of the study

The major objective of this paper is to examine the roles played by political marketing in influencing the voting pattern of the electorate in the 2015 and 2019 general elections at the federal level.

1.3 Research Questions

The research question for this paper arises from the objective. Did political marketing influence the 2015 and 2019 general elections in Nigeria?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Conceptual Review

Marketing and Political Marketing

Marketing is the activity, set of institutions and processes for creating, communicating, delivering and exchanging offerings that have values for customers, clients, partners and societies at large (American Marketing Association, 2017). The political class has identified the voting populace as their target audience in their search for political power. There is a trade of between the voters and the political office seekers. The political class is in need of voters vote to win an election while in the return the voters are in need of leaders who will meet their yearning and aspirations. In the heart of this trade of is the theory of exchange. As noted by Gbadayan (2011), exchange is an integral component of marketing which is the process of giving up one value for another value. In this instance, they seek vote in exchange for good governance. Kotler (2001) defined marketing “as a process by which individuals and groups obtain what they need and want through creating, offering and freely exchanging products and service of value with others”.

Differences between political marketing and mainstream marketing

Lock and Harris (1996) identified seven differences between mainstream marketing and political marketing.

- (a) In political marketing, the electorate go the political market the same to purchase the product. There is no such decision in mainstream marketing. In political marketing, the electorates are the consumers of the product and not customers as they cannot be represented by proxy.

- (b) In political marketing, there are long term costs in the decisions made by electorates and these decisions if it does not yield the needed benefit, the electorates have to wait for years to change that decision. In mainstream marketing, decisions can be reversed almost immediately.
- (c) In political marketing, it is a collective decision and voters live with it even though it was not their preference, this is quite difference from mainstream marketing where decision is based on individual preference.
- (d) Winners take all is the slogan in political marketing.
- (e) Candidate and their political party is complex intangible product which the electorate cannot unbundle. However, in mainstream marketing, consumers can change their mind on complex products and services.
- (f) There are strict constitutional and regulatory frameworks that must be met before new political parties are established and recognised especially in developed economies. In mainstream marketing new products and services are easily launched into the market.
- (g) Old leaders may lose an election while new leaders emerge whereas in conventional marketing, brand leaders stay in front.

2.2 Functions of Political Marketing

Product Function

A product is what is offered for sale, it must satisfy the needs of the consumers. A product is offered in exchange. In political marketing a product is sold by the seller (political parties) and purchased by the buyer (the voters). According to Menon (2008), "in political marketing there should be an exchange between political parties and the electorate in the political market". The product that is offered for sale to the voting public could in the form of ideologies, character of an individual or a better government.

Distribution Function

This function represents the availability of exchange offer to the exchange partner. This function is divided into two, campaign delivery and offering delivery. Providing voters with all information about the candidate or the party is a function of campaign delivery.

Cost Function

In political marketing, the electorate bears no cost in sourcing for relevant information about the political product. The information needed for the voters to make an informed decision about the candidate and their political party is provided free. This is in contrast to mainstream marketing where organisations sell products which are considered cost effect to the customers.

Communication Function

Communication is at the heart of political marketing (Menon, 2008). Communication function provides information to the primary exchange partner of the offer and its availability. This function makes the message simple, concise and straight for easy understand by the exchange partner.

News Management Function

This is part of the communication function that is targeted to mass media as secondary exchange partners. This function involves the utilisation of distribution channels with high credibility. The activities under these function includes online campaigns, public relations and media management.

Fund Raising Function

In mainstream marketing, fund raising is an integral part of a business and therefore does not constitute an issue. The success of political marketing depends on availability of funds just like other functions of political marketing. Political parties depend on membership fees, donations to raise funds needed to run their political campaigns.

3. POLITICS

There is no concise definition for politics as it varies in time and place (Modebadze, 2010). The field of politics is a market place full of competitors at all levels of the political space, local, state and national. As noted by Butler and Harris (2009) marketing activities in politics is intervallic building momentum as election approaches. Politics is a game of number where political actors are desperate to achieve their ultimate goal through legitimate and illegitimate means. This is in line with the observations of Heywood (1997) cited in Modebadze (2010:40) that politics is the exercise of power, exercise of authority, the making of collective decisions, the allocation of scarce resources, the practice of deception and manipulation, and so on. Politics is a serious business which involves the channeling of scarce resources towards the success of election.

3.1 A Review Of 2015 and 2019 General Elections

A political party is an organisation of a group of people who share certain ideology through which it seeks political power. A political party is an association formed for a specific purpose with the ultimate aim to aspire and contest political power through the electoral process (Alawode & Adesanya, 2015). The political space in Nigeria is based on party politics as there is no room yet for an independent candidate. Political marketing and strategies for 2015 general election began in mid-November 2014 with rallies in major states of the federation (Orji, 2015). The major political parties the People's Democratic Party and the All Progressive Congress adopted negative marketing strategies to out shine one another.

The 2015 general election in the country marked the first time in the history of Nigeria's return to civil rule in 1999 that a sitting president failed to win re-election bid. The contests were fierce between the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and the All Progressive Congress (APC). All Progressive Congress (APC) which came on board in 2013 was a fall out of a merger of different political parties comprising Congress for Political Change (CPC), Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN), All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP) and a faction of All Progressive Grand Alliance (APGA) (The Nation, May 29, 2015). The failure of Goodluck Jonathan of the then ruling Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and the victory of Muhammedu Buhari of the opposition All Progressive Congress (APC) can be attributed to the adoption of political marketing (Akinola & Heuva, 2018). As noted by Alawode and Adesanya (2016) political marketing is a campaign strategy adopted to influence voters' decision. The APC also won majority of states at the gubernatorial election as well as at the State Houses of Assembly and the National Assembly (Orji, 2015).

While the PDP based their 2015 campaign on transformation agenda, the APC came up with the change mantra. The change mantra became acceptable to Nigerians across all walks of life. The electoral value of the PDP and its candidate declined while the fortunes of APC and that of its candidate soared high. The political marketing strategy adopted by the All Progressive Congress (APC) to dislodge the ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP) was a combination of mass media and social media.

According to Ibrahim, Liman and Mato (2015), the major factors that determined the paradigm shift in the voting behaviour of the electorates in the 2015 general elections were fears, political socialisation, insecurity, expectations and economic situation. Political market unlike the conventional product marketing focused on what the present managers of the nation's economy has failed to do and how the incoming administration will address these issues.

The 2019 general election witnessed highlighted yet the role of political marketing in the political quest for power and the zeal for competitors in the political field to upset one another. The contest was a two horse race between the ruling All Progressive Congress (APC) the opposition People's Democratic Party. The PDP having realised why it lost the 2015 general election not only at the federal level but in some state hitherto controlled by them, approached the 2019 general election with cautions and enthusiasms. Political marketing tools and instruments were largely employed by the PDP and this paid off as it reclaimed part of the states it lost in 2015 even though the party lost at the presidential election.

3.2 Theoretical Review

Three Stage Model:

This model has been adjusted to be the most widely accepted theory of political marketing (Durmaz & Direkci, 2015). The model was developed by Robert Keith in 1960 (Donovan, 2012). According to Savigny and Temple (2010), the three stage model consists of three stages:

1. **First Stage:** In the first stage the organisation identifies the demand of the consumer, use the information obtained into the product and refine it.
2. **Second Stage:** This is the stage the organisation informs the customer on the changes that have made to the product to meet their needs.
3. **Third Stage:** This is the delivery of the product that will satisfy the consumer need at a profit to the organisation.

Using the three stage model, political parties understands the dire need of the electorate, produce this into a product in the form of an acceptable candidate and this present the candidate to the electorate in order to achieve victory at the poll (Savigny & Temple, 2010).

3.3 Empirical Review

Aghara, Nwaizugbo, Chukwuemeka and Onyeizugbe (2015), writing on the changing perspective of politics marketing in Nigeria. The objectives were to examine how developed economies have used politics and marketing to attain their levels of political development and examined the evolution and development of party politics in Nigeria. The ultimate goal of politics is power and the effective and efficient management of limited resources has increased the need for politics and marketing. For a nation like Nigeria, politics marketing can have an influence on how prudent and qualified leaders emerge through the poll, how scarce resources of the country can be aligned to achieve voters satisfaction and economic development. T

he paper recommends amongst other the deregistering of unviable political parties, a truly independent electoral body, the judiciary that is unbiased and the education of the electorate. Gbadeyan (2011), looked at political marketing strategies and democracy in Nigeria. The objective of the paper was to ascertain the best political marketing strategy that political actors can adopt to win election in the future. Information was obtained from well structured questionnaires that were distributed to 1531 respondent in three local government areas of Kwara State Nigeria.

Analysis of the data obtained from the field was done using Stepwise regression and Chi-square statistical tools. Finding obtained reveals that the best political marketing strategy was voters support and positive publicity. Further findings from the study show that presenting credible candidates for election is the best way to maximise voter's support. The paper recommends the abolition of monetary inducement and other items to influence voter's behaviour in an election.

Oluotu and Ogunro (2013) examined the effective of political marketing as a strategy for quality leadership and sustainable democracy in Nigeria. Democracy is based on the right of the people to participate freely on election matters, having the right to choose the candidates of their choice to represent them in governance. Democracy in Nigerian is still growing and quality of leaders needed to enhance growth has remained unachieved. Finding from the study indicate that lack of proper political marketing has been responsible for the poor leadership quality which has affected the growth of democracy negatively. The major problems according to this study, first is that the electorate or the populace are not considered as customers that need to be satisfied. Secondly, democracy can only be sustained when quality leaders are entrenched, to achieve this political marketing research, internal democracy, rational politics and green politics should be addressed holistically. The study recommends that time and resources should be devoted to gathering information on voter's behaviour and the adoption of marketing concept to enhance democratic dividends.

Tejumaiye, Simon and Obia (2018) examined the influence of political advertising on the presidential election in Nigeria held in 2015 in Lagos. The objective of the paper was to examine how political advertising influence that election. The theoretical framework was based on William McGuire information processing theory. Data collection instrument was through survey research. Using multiple sampling technique where 400 questionnaires were distributed with 99% returned. Results show that political advertising were responsible for 49% of the respondent. The results further show that other factors influenced their choice of voting in accordance with the research questions. Voter's perception of political advertising made it an issue based rather than being manipulated. Findings were voter's already formed a voting behaviour which was reechoed by political advertising.

4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The political market in Nigeria is increasing as the country deepens her democratic principles. The political awareness of Nigerian's today is a far departure from what was obtainable some years when the country returned to civil rule in 1999. The reasons for this are not farfetched. Not many believed that the country will have uninterrupted civilian to civilian government since 1999. Today Nigerian's are actively participating in the political market. Political marketing has helped to shape and remodel the minds of the people towards being politically alive. The outcomes of the 2015 and 2019 general elections in particular the 2015 general election were an eye opener to how political marketing could be judiciously used to unseat a sitting president.

This paper recommends that the electioneering campaigns should be based on issues to address the problems that are facing the country ranging from insecurity, hunger, corruption, marginalisation, unemployment but to mention but a few.

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