

# A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE INFLUENCE OF GOODLUCK JONATHAN AND MUHAMMADU BUHARI'S BILLBOARD CAMPAIGNS ON VOTER'S BEHAVIOUR IN ANAMBRA STATE

Daniel Too-chukwu Ezegwu

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Department of Communication Arts  
University of Uyo, Akwa Ibom State  
[ezegwudaniel@gmail.com](mailto:ezegwudaniel@gmail.com)  
+2348034630757

Agnes Ezeji

Department of Communication Arts  
University of Uyo, Akwa Ibom State  
[chionyeagnes@gmail.com](mailto:chionyeagnes@gmail.com)  
+2348033290256

Chioma Ifeoma Agbasimelo

Department of Mass Communication,  
Tansian University, Oba Anambra State  
[chiomastepup@yahoo.com](mailto:chiomastepup@yahoo.com)  
+2348037075484

**Abstract:** *This study examines the influence of Goodluck Jonathan and Muhammadu Buhari's billboard campaigns on voters' behavior in Anambra state. The study sought to ascertain if the electorates voting decision were influenced by their exposure to billboard adverts on Jonathan and Buhari, to find out which of the billboards message content the respondents recall more than the other, to determine which of the billboards the respondents prefer; as well as to ascertain the electorates' level of exposure to the billboard used in the 2015 presidential elections by Jonathan and Buhari and to determine whether there is a significant relationship between exposure to preferred billboard adverts and respondents' choice of candidate in the election. To achieve this, the study used the survey method with the questionnaire as research instrument. Through multi-stage and purposive sampling, 384 respondents were selected from three senatorial zones in Anambra state and administered the questionnaire. The findings indicated among other things, that voters in Anambra were significantly influenced by their exposure to these billboards and most of them recalled the message contents of Jonathan more than that of Buhari. The study found out that electorates in Anambra state prefer Jonathan's campaign billboard to that of Buhari and there is no significant relationship between exposure to preferred billboard advert and choice of candidate. In the light of the findings, it was recommended that voters should not rely on billboard advert as it only source of information about contestants. They should explore other sources such as radio, television and social media. The study also recommended that a lot should be done to maximize the potentials of billboard campaign for favourable voting decision.*

**Keywords:** Influence, Voter, Billboard, Preference and Political advertising

## INTRODUCTION

The use of billboard in advertising has become part of the political culture of most democracies and Nigeria as a democratic nation is not left out. Billboard usage has been in existence for some decades now. “Before the arrival of automobiles, primitive models of billboards were occasionally employed to inform people travelling on foot, horseback that an inn can be found ahead within a particular distance (Ezegwu and Nwankwo, 2013, p.194).

The outdoor advertising medium came into existence in 3200 BC as a means of communication by the Egyptians (Bidemi, 1999, p.136). Bovee and Arens (1994) posit that “outdoor advertising is the oldest form of advertisement and a medium with high impact rate. It attracts attention to itself through location, colour and boldness of its copy”. Billboards advertising relates to the usage of signs along the roadways for the purpose of advertising and promoting a range of products and services.

Billboards advertisement is designed to catch a person’s attention and create a memorable impression very quickly. They have to be readable in a very short time because they are usually read while passing at high speeds. Thus, there are usually only few words, in large print and arresting images in brilliant colour. If strategically placed, a motorist or pedestrian can absorb an important message in a twinkle of an eye. It goes a long way to persuade the masses into voting for a particular candidate during electioneering campaign. It is not surprising while many politicians employed the billboard during the 2015 general elections in Nigeria.

In fact, it has become a common trend in contemporary Nigerian society for people, marketers/advertisers and politicians to use billboards in showcasing one thing or the other. Thus, this study examines the influence of Goodluck Jonathan (former president) and Muhammadu Buhari’s billboards campaign on voters’ behaviour in Anambra state during 2015 presidential election in Nigeria.

## STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Billboards have become veritable tools for political campaigns. During the presidential election in Nigeria, political parties, political candidates, and other individuals made use of billboards to sell their parties and the candidates on their platforms. In some parts of Nigeria and Anambra state most of the political parties and their candidates erected billboards at the various parts of the state. They were designed to win public’s attention to different campaigners’ messages.

However, the billboard contains political messages of the candidates. For Goodluck Jonathan, some of his campaigns billboards have these words; “*Goodluck Nigeria*”, “*A wind of hope*”, “*vote great transformer*”. *Bring back Goodluck Jonathan* and “*vote for*



*continuity, vote for Goodluck Jonathan*” while Buhari’s billboards emphasized his commitment to transparency and accountability, “vote for a change”, vote ogbu agu” This paper therefore, ascertains the influence of former president Goodluck Jonathan and President Muhammadu Buhari’s billboard campaigns on voters’ behaviour; were voters’ decision influenced by their exposure to the billboard adverts of Goodluck and Buhari? Which of the billboards message content were recalled more than the other?

## **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

This study was based on the following objectives:

1. To find out if the electorate in Anambra State were influenced by their exposure to the billboard adverts on Goodluck Jonathan and Muhammadu Buhari.
2. To find out which of the billboards message these respondents recall more than the other.
3. To determine which of the billboards the respondents prefer to the other.
4. To ascertain the electorates’ level of exposure to the billboard used in the 2015 presidential elections by Goodluck and Buhari
5. To determine whether there is a significant relationship between exposure to preferred billboard adverts and respondents choice of candidate in the election.

## **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The study was based on the following research Questions:

1. Was the voting decision by the electorate in Anmabra State influenced by the billboard adverts of Jonathan and Buhari?
2. Which of the billboards message content between Jonathan and Buhari were recalled by these respondents?
3. Which of the billboards did the respondents prefer to the other?
4. What is the electorates’ level of exposure to Jonathan and Buhari adverts?
5. Is there a significant relationship between exposure to preferred billboard adverts and these respondents choice of candidate in the election?

## **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE ON BILLBOARDS ADVERTISING**

Billboard advertisement is a medium, which plays important roles in persuading and convincing the members of the public. Woodside (1990) notes that outdoor’s primary advantage over other media is its high frequency of exposure in an environment with relatively little clutter. Woodside also concluded that outdoor advertising is likely to be effective in increasing sales if used properly.

Meanwhile, using content analysis, Blasko (1985) found that large number of outdoor advertisers was more likely to follow accepted creative principles of outdoor advertising



than were small advertisers. He provided guidelines that would allow local and regional advertisers to develop more effective outdoor advertisements. A later group of studies conducted by Donthu, Cherian and Bhargava (1993) and Bhargava, Donthu and Caron (1994) found recall to be positively related to variety of factors, including brand differentiation, emphasis on product performance in the advertisement, inclusion of price in the advertisement, use of photograph in the advertisement, use of humour, use of colour and a good location.

In two recent experiments Bhargava and Donthu (1999) also found that outdoor advertising has the ability to quickly generate sales response, but that location and other marketing mix variables are moderating factors. Collectively, the literature suggests that well conceived and placed outdoor advertising can be effective in increasing awareness and generating sales. Ezegwu and Nwankwo, 2013, p.198 notes that:

Billboard advertisements are designed to catch a person's attention and create a memorable impression very quickly, leaving the reader thinking about the advertisement after they have driven pass it. Billboard advertising continues to be an effective method of reaching out to the consumers. Since these advertisements can be viewed by the consumers at any point of its effectiveness are cost saving and greater market coverage. Billboards are surely an efficient method to publicize products and services anywhere and anytime.

Similarly, in large-scale content analyses of billboards in American states of Michigan and Pennsylvania, Taylor and Taylor (1994) and Taylor (1997) found that billboards provide a wide range of potentially useful information to consumers. They concluded that small businesses would be harmed by lack of access to billboards. When it is used appropriately, billboards can provide benefits to the businesses that use them (Taylor and Franke, 2003).

## **TYPES OF BILLBOARDS**

There are different kinds of billboards. Below are some of them according Rampur (2012, cited in Ezegwu and Nwankwo, 2013, p.198):

1. **Poster billboards:** They are used for outdoor advertising. They are impressed on 8 to 30 sheets of heavy paper, according to the size. It could last for about a month, depending on weather conditions, after which it is best to remove them.
2. **Painted boards:** They are known as painted bulletins. They are covered with an outdoor paint which is resistant to weather. Some outdoor paints are specially made to withstand fading.
3. **Vinyl boards:** These are used as the latest methods of billboard advertising. They have attractive colour, durable life and really fine graphics and artwork. They have a brighter appearance and look much better than conventional billboards. They are usually sprayed with an UV protective coat and can last for years.
4. **Led billboards:** Are from the newer lot of outdoor advertising tools. The bright backlight and use of different colours grab instant attention of the onlookers. The adverts that are displayed are of high quality, and are generally computer prints, with



the addition of animation and other visual effects. The ads are becoming more interactive.

5. **Scrolling advert:** Here, if the advertiser pays for the entire board, he or she has the advantage of displaying about 10-30 ads on the same billboards.

## STRENGTHS OF BILLBOARD

Even though billboards are the most basic outdoor media used in reaching potential and actual consumers outside homes, it has some strengths and weaknesses. Some of the strengths are presented below:

1. Billboards ensure customized placement. You can place your billboard advertisement wherever you feel it will have impact the most.
2. Billboards are often large and intimidating, especially when placed in strategic places in middle of cities. This ensures that the message makes a quick and persuasive impression in the minds of the audience.
3. They are used to target consumers at odd times or during “unrelaxed” periods i.e. while they are on their way. This is different from other media whose messages are consumed while the audiences are relatively relaxed.
4. Messages on billboards can be viewed and reviewed as many times as possible. Nwabueze (2006, p.77) postulates that this provide high frequency of audience exposure to the message which is necessary in order to make an impression on the audience.
5. The billboard is a cost effective medium. It costs less to reach a greater number of people over a period of time than it would cost in other media.

## WEAKNESS OF BILLBOARDS

Some of the weaknesses of the billboard are as follows:

1. Long-term commitment billboard companies often have business and enter into contracts that involve long-term commitment mainly. This is because it takes a lot of time, energy and money to constantly change billboard adverts. According to Robertson (2012), billboard contracts usually cover duration of three months. This makes billboard advertising less conducive to business that frequently change their advertising companies on a weekly and monthly basis.
2. It could be expensive to produce a billboard message initially and the huge cost may discourage their usage.
3. It is basically a reminder medium, i.e. reminds the audience of what they have watched, heard or listened to as carried by other media. Therefore, if the audiences have not yet been exposed to a message through other media, they may find it difficult to understand the message.
4. Billboard targets only mobile audience. This means that if the target audience is not always on the road, its usage may become in-effective.

## **POLITICAL ADVERTISING INFLUENCE ON VOTERS**

Political advertising is one of the specialized areas of human communication and business. More specifically, it is an aspect of social advertising, which is part of social marketing (Asemah and Edegoh, 2012, p.249). Gana (1992) cited in Asemah and Edegoh (2012, p.249) notes that political campaigns involve canvassing for votes, which is a kind of political salesmanship. Page | 6

Election periods in any society generate a lot of interest among the political candidates in particular and the civil society in general. This is because the destiny of the people and the nation rests squarely on the shoulders of the successful candidates at the polls. It is against this backdrop that both political actors and their supporters deploy different persuasive strategies to elicit support and woo voters in order to gain and control power during the 2015 elections in Nigeria. Political advertising attempts to inform, educate, persuade, woo, and convince the audience to vote in a particular way or support a particular candidate. The sponsors and advert writers adopt different rhetorical or discourse strategies, symbolic appeals or expressions to achieve the primary goal of winning the support of the audience (Bell, 1991, Opeibi, 2004).

Similarly, Owuamalam (2002) avers that political advertising influences voter's behaviour because political advertising introduces political discourse, since it calls for a verdict on issues concerning the public. It uses pictographic presentations garnished with persuasive cause, hence consent will be engineered. Marcus (2006) says that political advertising instills positive emotions such as enthusiasm and hopefulness about their candidate to improve turn out and political activism while seeking to raise fear and anxiety about the challenger.

In addition, Nwosu (1990, pp,30-44) suggests that political advertising influence seems or tends to be strongest at the information or awareness creation level and limited or somewhat mixed at the attitudinal, opinion and behaviour change level in political activities. Ani (2008, p.257) gave the role of the media in politics as follows:

1. Reporting and interpreting events
2. Defining issues
3. Portraying
4. Investigating support
5. Identifying trend
6. Checking and analyzing public opinion.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

Theories are of great relevance in every academic endeavour. Thus, for us to have a better understanding of this study, *Uses and Gratifications* and *Persuasion theories* was chosen to provide the framework.



## The Uses and Gratification theory

The *uses and gratification theory* assumes that the mass media audience are not passive but take active role in interpreting and integrating media content into their own lives. Baran (2004, p.428) opines that “effects occur because the media do not do things to people. Rather, people do things with the media.., so the influence of the media is limited to what people allow it to be”. The theory was popularized by communication experts, like Blumler and Gurevitch (1974), but dating back to the 1920s studies of exposure to and influences of the early radio series, reminds us that for result-oriented communications, we must put the target audience member first (cited in Nwosu, 2007,p.5)

According to Baran and Davis (2006,p.262) Herts Herzog is credited as the originator of the theory and identified three types of gratification first, a means of emotional release; second , commonly recognized form of enjoyment, concerns the opportunities for wishful thinking and third, unsuspected form of gratification”. Other gratifications sought in the media are; information and education, guidance and advice, diversion and relaxation, social contact, value reinforcement, cultural satisfaction and emotions release.

Therefore, with Jonathan and Buhari billboards advertisement, people would be exposed to messages and by using the message they would retain and replicate the ideas in the message, by behaving in a similar way the message wants. In other words, those not exposed to Jonathan and Buhari’s billboard advertisement may not be influenced by it and may not prefer a candidate to the other, since they have no idea of the content of the advertisement. The import here is that the more frequent the electorates of Anambra state satisfy their needs through these billboards, the more the advert content would influence their voting behaviour.

## Persuasion Theory

The theory focuses on the psychological characteristics that affect a person’s perception and response to messages. According to Defossard (1997, p.8) the characteristics include:

- I .Knowledge and skills
- ii. Attitude towards behaviour and social issues.
- Iii.Beliefs and consequences
- v. Attitudes towards the sources of the messages.

Many of these are related to demographic characteristics, such as age gender, ethnic group, income and level of education. Persuasion theory also draws attention to the importance of message factors and source factors in influencing an audience. Defossard (1997,p.9) argues that message factors are the characteristics of a message that make it appropriate and effective for a particular audience; how long or complex it should be, what languages is best etc, different audience will have different preferences for message style. Source factors are characteristics of a message’s source that make it interesting, relevant and persuasive for a particular audience member.



Among the most influential source are: credibility, attractiveness, similarity, authority and expertise.

Persuasion is the process of changing the attitude and perception of a target audience through the content of mass media messages. Steiner (1972, cited in Ezegwu and Nwankwo, 2013, p.196) posits that persuasion is a process in which a communicator attempts to induce the belief, attitude or behaviour of another person or groups. Persuasion is seen as a deliberate attempt to modify the attitude or behaviour of another person or group by transmitting a message through the mass media or any other relevant medium.

This was the reason Jonathan (PDP) and Buhari (APC) used billboard as a veritable avenue to canvass, mobilize and whip up support for their candidatures/parties during the 2015 election.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study used survey research method. Nwabueze (2008, p.180) says that survey research studies both large and small population by selecting and studying samples chosen from the populations. The population of this study consists of registered voters in Anambra state. The population of registered voters in Anambra state for the 2015 presidential elections, according to statistics from the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), is 1,963; 173. The sample size for the study was 384 respondents. This was determined using Cozby's (2004, p.130) table for sample size determination. It is estimated that for a population of over 100,000 (hundred thousand at 95 percent confidence level and +- 5% error margin), the sample is 384.

The sample size for this study therefore, comprises 384 voters at the 2015 presidential election in Anambra State. The study adopted multi stage and purposive sampling technique in selecting the respondents. Ohaja (2003, p.82) avers that purposive sampling is used when the researcher seeks certain characteristics in his sampling element and wants to ensure that those chosen have the characteristics. Anambra state has 21 local government areas. In the first stage, Anambra state was divided into three senatorial zones, in the second stage seven (7) local governments areas were drawn from each of the senatorial zones. The researchers and the research assistants purposively selected four (4) local government areas from each of the senatorial zones in the state owing to their strategic nature, such as high population density and their popularity. Here are the selected local governments' areas.

Table1: *Anambra central senatorial zone*

NO	LocalGovernment Areas	Respondents
1	Awka south	32
2	Awka North	32
3	Idemili North	32
4	Idemili South	32

	<b>Total</b>	<b>128</b>
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Table2: *Anambra South senatorial zone*

NO	LocalGovernment Areas	Respondents
1	Aguata	32
2	Nnewi North	32
3	Orumba North	32
4	Ihiala	32
	<b>Total</b>	<b>128</b>

Table 3: *Anambra North senatorial zone*

NO	Local Government Areas	Respondents
1	Ogbaru	32
2	Oyi	32
3	Onitsha North	32
4	Anambra East	32
	<b>Total</b>	<b>128</b>

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study distributed 384 copies of the questionnaire to selected respondents. But only 372 were returned and found useable, representing 97% high response rate and mortality rate of only 3%.

Table 4: *Demographic characteristics of the respondents*

Variable	Frequencies	Percentages
Age		
18-28	163	44
29-39	129	35
40 and above	80	21
<b>Total</b>	<b>372</b>	<b>100</b>
Gender		
Male	223	60
Female	149	40
<b>Total</b>	<b>372</b>	<b>100</b>
Marital Status		
Married	159	43
Single	213	57
<b>Total</b>	<b>372</b>	<b>100</b>
Religion		
Christianity	341	92
Muslim	18	5
Traditional religion	13	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>372</b>	<b>100</b>

Educational Qualification		
FSLC	43	12
SSCE	87	23
OND/ NCE	64	17
HND/BSC	151	41
Post Graduate	27	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>372</b>	<b>100</b>

**Research Question 1:** were the respondents' voting decision influenced by the billboard adverts of Jonathan and Buhari?

Table 5: *Respondents perception on influence of Jonathan and Buhari billboard adverts on their voting decision*

Variables	Frequencies	Percentages
Yes	208	56
No	126	34
Can't say	38	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>372</b>	<b>100</b>

The table above indicates that voting decisions of respondents were to a large extent influenced by their exposure to these billboard adverts, 208 (56%) respondents agreed on this issue. This finding tallies with Nwabueze (2006, p.76) assertion that “intimidating nature of these billboards in the middle of cities and on high ways, including the high fidelity of images/messages on them, make a quick but persuasive impression in the minds of the mobile audience.

**Research Question 2:** Which of the billboards message content between Jonathan and Buhari would the respondents recall?

Table 6: *Respondents view on which of the billboard message content they recall more*

Variable	Frequencies	Percentages
Jonathan	178	48
Buhari	101	27
Can't say	93	28
<b>Total</b>	<b>372</b>	<b>100</b>

The table proves that those who recall the billboard message content of Jonathan (48%) are more than those who recall that of Buhari (27%).

**Research Question 3:** Which of the billboards the respondents prefer more than the other?

Table 7: Respondents most preferred billboard advert

Variables	Frequencies	Percentages
Jonathan	193	52
Buhari	71	19
Can't say	108	29
<b>Total</b>	<b>372</b>	<b>100</b>

From the table above, most (52%) of the respondents prefer the billboard adverts of Jonathan to those of Buhari (19%).

**Research Question 4:** What is the respondents' level of exposure to Jonathan and Buhari's billboard campaign?

Table 8: Respondents view on level of exposure to billboard campaigns of Jonathan and Buhari

Variables	Frequencies	Percentages
Always	118	32
Often	137	36
Rarely	96	25
Never	21	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>372</b>	<b>100</b>

The table indicates that 32% (118) of the respondents were always exposed to Jonathan and Buhari's billboard. This finding agrees with Udeze and Akpan (2013, p.54) findings that all the electorate in Imo State said they were exposed to political advertising in the last gubernatorial election in 2011. 36% (137) said often.

**Research Question 5:** Is there a significant relationship between exposure to preferred billboard adverts and choice of candidate in the election?

Table 9: Respondents influenced on choice of candidate through exposure to billboard political Advertising

Variables	Frequencies	Percentages
Yes	146	39
No	167	45
Can't say	59	16
<b>Total</b>	<b>372</b>	<b>100</b>

Data from the table reveals that there was no significant relationship between exposure to preferred billboard advert and choice candidate. This finding justifies the suitability of the uses and gratification theory in this study. The theory contends that mass media audience are not passive but take active role in interpreting and intergrating media content into their own live. Supporting this view, McQuail (2010,p.407) emphasized the fact that audience often have social and cultural roots and supports



that protect them against unwanted influence and make for autonomy in choice and response to what they receive.

## CONCLUSION

The use of billboard for political campaign has served as a good political communication medium through which political candidates attempt to market themselves to the electorate. The persuasive messages produce varying reactions from different segments of the voters', either in favour or against both of them or their political parties.

This study concludes that voters in Anambra state were significantly influenced by their exposure to these billboards campaigns. Most of them recalled the message contents of Jonathan more than that of Buhari. It further concludes that Anambra electorates prefer Jonathan's billboard campaigns to that of Buhari and there is no significant relationship between exposure to preferred billboard advert and choice of candidate. The implication is that the influence of these billboard campaigns are limited to what people allowed it to be.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The study suggests that the electorate should not rely on billboard advert or campaign as the only source of information about contestants. It should explore other sources such as radio, television, social media, friends and party members, who could offer useful information for its voting decisions, because billboards messages are always brief and cannot tell all about a candidate.

More studies should be carried out to find out reasons why respondents preferred and recalled the message contents of Jonathan's billboard campaign more than that of Buhari. Since 21 respondents said they were not exposed to either of the billboard adverts, this could suggest that more needs to be done to maximize the potentials of billboard campaign for a favourable voting behaviour.

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### APPENDIXES

(Some of the Billboards of Jonathan and Buhari)

















