



## **AN EXAMINATION OF THE IMPACT OF POLITICAL MARKETING DURING THE 2019 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS IN NIGERIA**

Bigman Nwala  
Ignatius Ajuru University of Education  
Port Harcourt, Rivers State  
Nwala.bigman@iaue.edu.ng  
+2348065634621

Temple Uwalaka  
University of Canberra  
temple.uwalaka@canberra.edu.au  
Building 9B37, University of Canberra  
Bruce Campus, ACT 2617, Australia.  
+61421259029

### **Abstract**

The debate on the influence of political advertisements is an ongoing one. It has been argued that political messages advertised during elections tend to change voter preference of candidates during election as other studies show that political advertisements have null effect on voter preferences during elections. This study attempts to lend a voice to the debate by examining the impact of newspaper political advertisements on voter behaviour during the 2019 general elections in South-South Zone of Nigeria. The study reports data from a content analysis (N=196) and a (paper-based) survey (N=400) of voters in the South-South Zone of Nigeria. Findings demonstrate that majority of the issues advertised in the newspapers by both the APC and PDP were on the economy and security. Result further demonstrates who were married and are civil servants reported to have been motivated to vote and made their candidate choice based on the issues advertised in the newspapers by the APC and PDP. Among others, the study recommends that political parties should carefully and strategically construct their newspaper political advertisement messages to reflect the political parties and their candidates' strengths and campaign promises.

**Keywords:** political advertisement, political marketing, persuasive messages, 2019 elections, Nigeria,

### **Introduction**

The debate on the influence of political advertising is an ongoing one in political marketing. The debate is placed in political advertisement skeptics and the optimists. The latter group have argued that the emphasis political parties and their supporters give to issues in their advertorial campaigns in the media impacts voter's candidates' preferences. They argue that political messages advertised in the media influence those who expose themselves to the messages during elections (Abati, 2010; Opene, 2012). However, some scholars have demonstrated that issues political parties presented to voters in the media have little or no



effect on voters' preference of candidates during elections (Okunna & Omenugha, 2012; Zumofen & Gerber, 2018). In this paradigm debate, both camps do however agree that political marketing is vital during election campaigns.

Political marketing is the application of marketing principles and procedures in political campaigns by individuals and organizations (Newman, 1994). To apply marketing principles to a political campaign means that the campaign will understand the voter's needs as in product marketing and develop a product to satisfy those needs (Akinola & Adekunle, 2022). Political advertisement, however, has been defined as a structured and composed non-personal communication, typically paid for and generally persuasive in nature, about products by revealing sponsors through a variety of media platforms (Arens, 2002; Arens, Weigold, & Arens, 2012). From these definitions of political advertisement, the fundamental idea of a political advertisements is that they are usually paid for, strongly persuasive and promote either an idea or a politician instead of promoting a product (Saleem, Hanan, & Tariq, 2015). These messaging in political advertisement target the voters with precision. When done properly, it eliminates huddles in the way of the politician or political party as their message and campaign promises will reflect the yearnings of the voters. This precision targeting is forcing some scholars to treat political marketing with apprehension and nervousness. These concerned scholars argue that political marketing will destroy political parties with long term ideology and platforms as they will be replaced with politicians who are market driven, short term focused and chase after electoral success (Akinola & Adekunle, 2022; Hughes, 2011).

A result from India revealed that social media buzz relating to political parties did not have a positive and significant effects on the number of seats won during the 2014 Indian general elections (Safiullah, Pathak, Singh, & Anshul, 2017). It has been noted that issues presented by political parties in their campaigns are consequential to voter preference as these political campaigns have effects on voters' candidates' choices (Lipsitz & Padilla, 2021; Passwaiter, 2020; Ridout, Fowler, & Franz, 2021). This means that political advertisement is an indispensable agent of social change. For example, it has been stated that political branding strategy of the conservative party is related to their return to power in 2010 (Pich, Dean, & Punjaisri, 2016).

### **Research Questions**

Many studies have tried to evaluate the impact of political marketing and advertisement to voters' choice and preference. Their results are mixed with many of those studies arguing that



there is no significant relationship between political advertisement exposure and voter preference during elections. Few studies have investigated this question in the political marketing scholarship in Nigeria. Majority of these studies found that exposure to political marketing was not a determining factor to voters' choice (Olujide, Adeyemi, & Gbadeyan, 2011). Fewer studies have even studied the 2019 general elections in Nigeria. Among these studies, only Akinola and Adekunle (2022) looked at the 2019 elections from political marketing perspective. Even they, reviewed if the election was voter-centric as they evaluated if the elections were market driven. However, they did not enquire about the influence of political advertisement to voter preference. This study will close that gap in the literature. The objective of this study is to examine the impact of newspaper political advertisement on voter behaviour during the 2019 presidential elections in South-South zone of Nigeria.

The study attempts to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the issues and frequency of occurrence raised in newspapers' political advertisements by APC and PDP during the 2019 presidential elections campaigns in South-South zone of Nigeria?
2. What is the prominence of occurrence of each of the issues identified in the newspapers' political advertisements by APC and PDP during the 2019 presidential elections in South-South zone of Nigeria?
3. To what extent did the issues advertised in the newspapers by APC and PDP impact voters' voting decisions and preference during the 2019 presidential election in South-South zone of Nigeria?

### **Literature Review**

Political marketing has been scorned by some scholars (Akinola & Adekunle, 2022; Hughes, 2011) while adjudged as the best way forward for politics by other scholars (Lees-Marshment, 2003; Scammell, 2014). While some scholars have argued that embracing a voter-orientation may lead to populists policies rather than sensible programmes, and that marketisation of politics weakens the conspicuousness of elections and nurtures transient and non-policy matters (Butler & Collins, 1999; Hay, 2007). Others contend that political marketing is suitable for politics to become more responsive to citizens' needs and demand,



as that is the very essence of politics itself; and that political marketing has made consumers become more collectively powerful, co-creators of public policies rather than mere consumers (Lees-Marshment, 2003; Scammell, 2014). It has been noted that there is no significant difference between the various forms of mass persuasion methods, though the terminology used may vary (Schleifer, 2014). For example, an analysis of the Psychological operations (PSYOP) campaign of the Islamic Organisation Hamas, against Israel in the past decade demonstrates that there is a striking similarity between propaganda and political marketing (Schleifer, 2014).

It has been stated that personal experience allowed the informants or voters to make sense of and argue against campaign messages, and that cynicism often guided participants to unpack the generic conventions of political advertising, and opposing partisan strategies (Kjeldsen & Hess, 2021). Personal experience and cynicism enable participants to critically distance their emotion response from their reading, watching, and listening to any political advertisement. This critical distancing reveals connections between rationality and emotionality through deliberative embedding. Meaning that the emotional is understood in terms of and negotiated in relation to already established cognitive frameworks of information, opinions and cynical readings of the genre (Kjeldsen & Hess, 2021). However, this is not the case in a climate of a broken political trusts. According to Andrei (2018), in a broken-trust climate, political advertisement is not a functional paradigm. This is because when public trust is gravitating towards zero, it is more and more difficult to involve political marketing methods and concepts such as political advertisement, because what one tries to say as a message is less credible and it is hard for a politician to convince people of goodwill (Andrei, 2018). Thus, without an authentic voter-politician exchange, relation, political marketing is only a label and is contributing to a fake-show, a 'Potemkin style' political imagery, cardboard politics or political entertainment (Andrei, 2018). The arguments here demonstrate that voters are smart and can tune out an emotional political advertisement and that voters will not indulge a politician of their attention when they distrust the politician.

Findings from some studies have shown that political marketing and advertisement are insignificant in voter persuasion. In their study that evaluated political advertisement and voter behaviour, Saleem et al. (2015) found that voter pre-existing support and liking of a political advertisement have strong association to deepening voter loyalty to their respective political parties in Pakistan. This result shows that political advertisement works more on the already converted and converts no further voter. Similarly, result from a recent study



indicates a weak and flawed strategic used of celebrities in political advertisement where the celebrities are scarcely mentioned and depicted in a non-innovative, tradition fashion (Fernández-Gómez, Pineda, & Gordillo-Rodriguez, 2021). This type of celebrity placement in political marketing fails to impact the candidacy of the political aspirants running the advertisement.

Other results showed that implicit attitudes do not change primarily in response to political advertisement's emotional valence. However, implicit attitude improve in response to increased familiarity with the object such as the politician or political party (Ryan & Krupnikov, 2021). This study, like Kjeldsen and Hess (2021) revealed that emotional political advertisements do not influence voters decision making during elections but that personal experience and increased familiarity do impact how voters react to political candidates. This implies that political aspirants need to work on the interpersonal selling points than the mass mediated action that they attempt to initiate via political advertisement.

In detailing how candidates conduct political marketing, study showed that candidates benefitting from a comparative advantage (incumbent and front runners) tend to rely on enthusiasm appeals more than fear in their political advertisements while more extreme candidates, and competitive political races adopt fear in the political advertisements and foster fear in their community than embrace enthusiasm in the political advertisements (Nai & Maier, 2021). In Czech Republic, finding shows that podcasts present opportunities for relationship building between the citizens and their political representative (Tranová & Veneti, 2021). According to their result, the relationship that is forged between the politician and their voters via podcasts are real and translates to positive voter behaviour change during election. Using political relationship marketing theory, the study argues that authenticity, conversational dynamism, and a carefully curated personalisation of the communication that the podcasts provide create a sense of attachment and belonging between the politicians and the voters. This finding relates to other results discussed above. The central theme of many of these studies (Andrei, 2018; Kjeldsen & Hess, 2021; Ryan & Krupnikov, 2021; Saleem et al., 2015) is one of interpersonal abilities of the politician rather than the grandeur of his or her political advertisements. This shows that interpersonal relationship is significant to how voters perceive political aspirants and politicians.

In Nigeria like the rest of the world, the question about the impact of political advertisement on voter preference remains unresolved. Duru (2021) stated that new media political



campaigns did not influence the electoral behaviour and voting pattern of electorate in Imo State, Nigeria during the 2019 governorship election. Results also shows that the 2019 presidential election was extremely monetized, violent, fraught with all manners of electoral misconducts that are antithetical to principles and practices of political marketing (Akinola & Adekunle, 2022). Political advertising is a marketing strategy employed by communication experts to sell the candidate or party to the voters. Political advertising draws from gaining attention of the voters, through the various mass media with the aim of creating awareness about a party's candidate in order to influence voters (Okpara, Anuforo, & Achor, 2016). Scholars (Adanlawo & Reddy, 2020; Nwosu, 2003; Okpara et al., 2016) conceptualise political advertising by narrowing it to the use of media by political party's candidate to increase voter exposure about the party and candidate. Political advertising is a form of campaign used by candidates contesting for a public office to reach and influence voters.

In a quantitative study that investigated the influence of political advertising on voters' endorsement in the 2015 general elections in Ondo State, Nigeria (N=400), Felix and Olakunle (2017) revealed that political advertisement did not stimulate voters to cast their votes in the 2015 general elections in Ondo State. According to them, this was because the electorates were not influenced at all by political campaign advertisements. This result is contrary to findings from other studies (Okpara et al., 2016; Olujide et al., 2011). These studies unlike Felix and Olakunle (2017) found strong evidence of exposure to political advertising and voters' choice of candidate. Felix and Olakunle (2017) found that political advertising has no significant effects on the electorate and that political advertisement was not a determining factor that made voters cast their votes as majority of the voters said they were not motivated by the political advertisements throughout the period of the elections. So, the advertisement message made little or no impact on the voters. While the results of these studies are mixed with many of the results leaning towards no impact of political marketing to voter change in behavior, the current study is conducted to add a voice in the literature particularly as it concerns South-South zone of Nigeria.

## **Methodology**

This study adopted a mixed methods approach comprising of a content analysis of newspapers political advertisements and a survey of voters about the 2019 presidential elections. First, in the content analysis, a total population of 388 issues were analysed. This population comprised all editions of the four newspapers (*The Guardian, The Nation, The*



*Punch* and *The Daily Sun*) from November/December 2018 to January and February 2019, which are the months under study based on INEC political calendar for campaigns leading to 388 issues. The study employed the sample size determination table (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970; Nwala, Umor, & Njoku, 2022). With 388 as the population of the study, the corresponding value was 196. Therefore, the sample size for the content analysis is 196. It employed simple random sampling technique using constructed and continues week. It also adopted code sheet as the instrument of data collection and used simple percentage to analyse the data.

The survey was conducted in English. It required 25 minutes to complete and consisted of 40 mandatory questions. The survey consisted of five sections, including general information, exposure to newspaper advertisements during the 2019 elections, extent of exposure to issues advertised in the newspapers, issues advertised in the newspapers by APC and PDP as motivation for voter decision, and issues advertised in the newspapers by PDP and APC as a factor for candidate preference at the polls. Common method variance was reduced by mixing positive and negatively worded items in the questionnaire. The negatively worded items were re-coded during the data coding period to make constructs symmetric, and this procedure satisfied the statistical contention of common methods bias variance (Uwalaka, 2017, 2021; Uwalaka, Rickard, & Watkins, 2018).

Outside descriptive statistics, a multiple regression analysis was conducted to analyze how well issues advertised in the newspapers by PDP and APC impact voter choice during the 2019 presidential election in South-South geopolitical zone in Nigeria. Age, gender, marital status, and occupation were measured as categorical variables where the numbers assigned to them were indicative and not for analytic power. Exposure to newspaper advertisements during the 2019 elections was measured dichotomously were 1 = exposure to newspaper advertisements and 0 = no exposure to newspaper advertisement, extent of exposure to issues advertised in the newspapers, issues advertised in the newspapers by APC and PDP as motivation for voter decision, and issues advertised in the newspapers by PDP and APC as a factor for candidate preference at the polls were all measured using Likert Scale where 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree.

## **Results**

This study explores issues in APC/PDP newspaper advertisement campaigns and voter behavior in 2019 presidential election in South-South Nigeria. The study utilised content



analysis and survey. It found that majority of the issues in newspaper advertisement of APC and PDP about 2019 presidential election in Nigeria were published on economy and security with APC publishing the highest. Table 1 below shows that out of the 196 issues published in the newspapers under investigation, economy has 71 issues representing 36%, security has 46 issues representing 23%, education has 18 issues (9%) corruption has 7 issues (4%), unemployment 11 issues (6%), infrastructure 20 issues (10%) and others has 23 issues representing twelve percent. However, *The Nation* and *Daily Sun* newspapers have more issues on APC while *The Guardian* and *Punch* conferred more stories to issues concerning PDP presidential candidate. Nonetheless, APC has more coding items on the newspaper advertisements of 2019 presidential election than the PDP. Catch phrases such as ‘better economy for Nigerians’, ‘Better jobs’, ‘Better life’, and ‘Better security’ dominated the newspapers under investigation.

**Table 1: Frequency of each of the issues advertised in the newspapers**

S/ N	ISSUES	GD	%	TH N	%	PC H	%	DS U	%	AP C	%	PD P	%	TO	%
1	Economy	18	35	19	27	17	24	17	24	39	55	32	45	71	36
2	Security	12	26	13	28	11	24	10	22	22	48	24	52	46	23
3	Education	2	20	5	25	6	30	5	25	8	44	12	66	18	9
4	Corruption	1	14	3	43	2	28	1	14	5	71	2	29	7	4
5	unemployment	2	18	3	28	2	18	4	36	6	45	6	55	11	6
6	Infrastructure	4	20	5	25	4	20	7	36	7	35	13	65	20	10
7	Other	3	13	11	48	2	9	7	30	12	60	8	40	23	12
	Total	42	22	59	30	44	22	51	26	99	51	97	49	196	100

**Key:** GD:*The Guardian*; THN: *The Nation*; PC:*Punch*; DS:*Daily Sun*; EC:Economy; SE: Security; ED: Education; CN: Corruption; UT: Unemployment; IE: Infrastructure; OR: Other

Table 2 shows that issues on economy and security received more prominence in the newspaper advertisements of APC and PDP about 2019 presidential election. A total of 193 representing 98% of the 196 issues advertised in the newspapers under study were published in full page and half pages, majority of these issues were found on economy and security especially in the front, center spread and full pages of the newspapers in focus. Out of the 196 issues advertisements published in the newspapers on APC and PDP about 2019 presidential election, 153 presenting 78% were found on full page, 40 (20%) were found on half page while 3 representing 2% were found in quarter page of the newspapers. Out of these, APC focused on economy, this is because out of the total of 16 advertisements APC placed on the front pages, 9 were on economy. This is contrary to the manifesto of the political party as



APC promised to fight corruption. One would think that they would concentrate their advertisements on corruption mantra; they rather considered economy as a factor and placed it on the front pages to influence the voters while PDP on the other hand focused on security; Out of the 10 issues PDP advertised on the front pages, security had 8 advertisements. PDP had in Goodluck Jonathan’s administration managed the economy of the nation to the commendation of the Western world. They however left the economy which they should have built their advertisements on for insecurity in Nigeria.

**Table 2: Prominence given to the Table issues advertised based on placement**

SN	PLM	GD	%	TN	%	PC	%	DS	%	EC	%	SE	%	ED	%	CN	%	UT	%	IE	%	OR	%	APC	%	PDP	%	TL	%
1	FP	8	19	6	10	5	11	7	14	9	13	8	17	3	17	1	14	3	27	2	10	-	-	16	16	10	10	26	13
2	BP	4	10	3	5	1	2	1	2	2	2	1	2	1	6	2	29	1	9	1	5	1	4	3	3	6	6	9	5
3	CP	4	10	6	10	5	12	4	8	5	7	3	7	2	11	1	14	2	18	4	20	2	9	11	11	8	8	19	10
4	IP	26	61	44	74	33	75	39	76	55	77	34	74	12	67	3	43	5	45	13	60	20	87	69	70	73	75	142	72
TL		42	22	59	30	44	22	51	26	71	36	46	23	18	9	7	4	11	6	20	10	23	12	99	51	97	49	196	100

**Key:** FP: Front page; BP: Back page; CP: Centre spread page; IP: Inside page; TL: Total

Table 3 shows that participants between the ages of 36 to 45 (40%) and 18 to 25 (37%) participated more in the study than other age brackets. Female participants were slightly in the majority as about 52% (208) of the participants in the study were female while 48% (192) were male. Civil or public servant (49%) participated more in study than privately employed workers (20%), students (18%), and unemployed (13%).

**Table 3. Participants sample characteristics, N=400 (% in bracket)**

Description	Options	Frequency (%)
<b>Age</b>	18-25	148(37)
	26-35	52 (13)
	36-45	160 (40)
	45 and above	40 (10)
<b>Occupation</b>	Student	72 (18)
	Public Servant	196 (49)
	Privately employed	80(20)
	Unemployed	52 (13)
<b>Gender</b>	Male	192 (48)
	Female	208 (52)



A multiple regression analysis was performed to analyse how well issues advertised in the newspapers by APC and PDP motivated voters' voting decision. After cleaning the data, the dataset was transported into SPSS for analysis. Issues advertised in the newspapers, gender, marital status, occupation, age, advertisements influence, media exposure, voters' choices of candidates, and voter motivation were imputed into the SPSS for analysis. In this multiple regression analysis, issues advertised in the newspapers by PDP and APC was the dependent variable and gender, marital status, occupation, age, advertisements influence, ad exposure, voters' choices of candidates and voter motivation were independent variables.

In combination, gender, marital status, occupation, age, advertisements influence, media exposure, voter motivation resonated with voters, and accounted for a statistically significant 97% of variability in issues advertised in the newspapers from both political parties, adjusted [ $R^2 = .973$ ,  $F(10, 368) = 1343$ ,  $p < .005$ ].

**Table 4 Results for issues advertised in the newspapers from PDP and APC and voters' choice of candidates**

Model	B	T	Sig.	F	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>
1 (Constant)		-4.763	.000*	1343	.973
Age	-.063	-1.678	.094		
Gender	.040	1.557	.120		
Marital status	.327	9.231	.000*		
Occupation	.272	6.846	.000*		
Ad Exposure	.100	5.883	.000*		
Advertisement's influence	.175	5.681	.000*		
Voters motivation	.283	3.939	.000*		
Voters' choice of Candidate	.487	11.933	.000*		

Note: Regression coefficient \* $p < .001$ ,

Of the eight primary predictor variables, six variables (marital status, occupation, ad exposure, advertisement influence, voters' choices of candidates, and voter motivation) made a unique statistically significant contribution to the model. Voters preference of candidate or voters' choice of candidate made a unique statistical significant contribution to the model [ $(\beta = .487$ ,  $t(368) = 11.93$ ,  $p < .005$ ); marital status [ $(\beta = .327$ ,  $t(368) = 9.231$ ,  $p < .005$ ); occupation [ $(\beta = .272$ ,  $t(368) = 6.846$ ,  $p < .005$ ), ad exposure [ $(\beta = .100$ ,  $t(368) = 5.883$ ,



$p < .005$ ), advertisement influence [ $(\beta = .175, t(368) = 5.681, p < .005)$ ], and voters motivation [ $(\beta = .283, t(368) = 3.939, p < .005)$ ]

The standardized beta values ( $\beta$ ) of the significant predictors show that the issues advertised by PDP and APC had an impact on voters' choice of candidates in the election than any other variable in the regression model (see Table 4 above). This means that voters who reported to have followed the issues advertised by PDP and APC made their choice of a candidate through the manifestos and campaign promises than any other variable. Marital status was second with a beta value ( $\beta$ ) of 9.231, followed by occupation of the voter with a beta value ( $\beta$ ) of 6.846. ad exposure is next with a beta value ( $\beta$ ) 5.883. Finally, advertisements influence and voter motivation are the last two with beta values ( $\beta$ ) of 5.681 and 3.939 respectively.

This means that voters who followed the issues advertised in the newspapers by APC and PDP, who are married, and are public servants are more likely to have chosen their candidates based on the issues advertised by the political parties. The result further reveals that those who are settled and are self-efficacious were more interested to follow issues APC and PDP advertised in the newspapers than those who are unmarried and do not work in the civil service.

## **Discussion and Conclusion**

The study examined the impact of newspapers political advertisements on voters' behaviour during the 2019 presidential election in South-South zone of Nigeria using a content analysis of newspapers political advertisements from APC and PDP during the 2019 presidential election in Nigeria and responses from a paper-based survey of voters in South-South zone of Nigeria. This study demonstrates that the majority of the issues advertised in the newspapers by the APC and PDP were on economy and security. The result further uncovered that APC published more issues in the newspapers than the PDP. There was a heavy slant to economy-based issues such as jobs, improved living condition, improved economy and better security. Findings illustrate that both APC and PDP were not strategic in their newspaper political advertisements. For example, the APC are loved by Nigerians because of their war against corruption. This was their political capital and the issue that propelled them to success in the 2015 presidential election. However, APC's newspaper political advertisements were heavily slanted towards economy. They argued in their newspaper political advertisements to be the party that will improve the economy even though the economy was weaker under APC than



when PDP was in power. Conventional wisdom will suggest that APC flaunts their anti-graft war success. However, the party extolled their handling of the economy which is contrary to the realities on ground.

Similarly, the PDP also spent a good amount of their newspaper political advertisements on security and insecurity. The party sparingly talked about the economy. This was odd given that the economy was one of the few things that PDP was credited to have excelled in when they were in power in Nigeria. PDP was not strategic in their newspapers' political advertisements. Exposing the voters with political messages that will resonate with the voters and be of strategic relevance for the party is crucial in achieving success at the polls. During the election, both the APC and PDP made mistakes or cancelled each other with messaging mistakes. A good message that is strategically relevant to the parties is crucial to the success of the political parties as it exposes voters to relevant messages about the political party and can set the agenda in the political public sphere.

From the forgoing, it is logical to argue that newspaper political advertisements set the agenda for the citizens and educate them on the importance of elections during the 2019 presidential elections in South-South region of Nigeria. The basic essence of political advertising is to bring about attitudinal change of individual voters who expose themselves to such advertisements. Although, political advertisements seem to alter the composition of the voters but the registered partisan voters are much more likely to vote for their own party's candidate (Saleem et al., 2015). These compositions of changes result in nontrivial effect on the actual voting. The implication of this is that there may be other social factors that motivate voters during election.

Some of the issues in the newspaper advertorials of the two political parties in the 2019 presidential election were considered as motivating factors to voters' decision during the election in South-South zone of Nigeria. Findings from this study demonstrate that issues advertised in the newspapers by both PDP and APC motivated and aided the preference for a candidate of voters who were married and are civil servants during the 2019 presidential election in the South-South zone of Nigeria. This finding shows that age and gender were statistically insignificant on the motivation to vote and voting preference of voters who were exposed to newspaper political advertisements during the 2019 presidential election in South-South region of Nigeria. This finding is contrary to some studies. For example, it has been stated that personal experience and not political advertisements impact voters motivation and



voting preference (Kjeldsen & Hess, 2021). This reliance on personal experience and cynicism, is as a result of broken political trust (Andrei, 2018). This broken political trust encompasses even the use of celebrities for political endorsement and advertisements (Fernández-Gómez et al., 2021). Another finding revealed that voters will need to be familiar with the politician before political advertisements and messages can resonate with the voters (Nai & Maier, 2021). Unlike the delineated studies, this study finds that political advertisements impact voters' motivation and preference. This supports the argument that political advertisements and engagement bring the politician closer to the voter and improve the bonds between the voter and the politician thereby influence the voting preference (Tranová & Veneti, 2021).

This finding also support others that found that political advertising was the major factor that influenced voters' choice during 2015 presidential election in Nigeria (Tejumaiye, Simon, & Obia, 2018). Findings from Okpara et al. (2016) found that the political advertisements have significant effects on the electorate. This is because voters' choice of candidates in the 2015 governorship election in Imo States were significantly influenced by candidate's political advertisement. Although the result of this study did not find such sweeping effect, data from this study uncovered a relationship between occupation, education, and marital status as well as exposure to newspapers political advertisements and voters' motivation to vote and voting preference during the election. Results have also found that the different format, language, style and techniques used in delivering candidate's political messages help in determining voter's choice of a candidate in an election and that a good number of the public have great regard for media messages, and that this, passively influence them (Opene, 2012). The newspaper political advertisements helped not only set agenda during the election in 2019, but also help in voter's behavioural change in support of certain political candidates. The political advertisements in this study conditioned voters to change their attitudes and adopt the attitude or support a particular political aspirant that the advertisements have recommended.

The study confirms that APC had higher issues and published more newspaper political advertisements than the PDP. It was uncovered that the two political parties strategically failed to communicate through their newspaper political advertisement, message that reinforce their strengths. Rather, the two political parties communicated issues around which their greatest weakness lie. The parties could have been served better with targeted strategic messaging.



This study also demonstrates that those voters who reported to have been motivated to vote due to issues advertised in the newspapers by the two political parties (PDP and APC) were married, civil servants and those who factored the advertised issues in their preference for a political candidate. This result demonstrates that the media play an agenda setting function during the election campaigns. South-South voters exposed themselves and discussed the issues APC and PDP advertised in their newspaper's political advertisements during the 2019 presidential election.

This study recommends that political parties and political candidates carefully and strategically construct their newspapers political advertisement messages to reflect their strengths and campaign promises.

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