

Political Advertising In Nigeria And Adherence To Codes: Political Marketing Communications Within The Rubrics Of Laws

Ifeanyi Martins NWOKEOCHA¹

¹Department of Journalism and Media Studies, Federal University Otuoke, Bayelsa State, Nigeria

Corresponding author : ifeanyimn@fuotuoche.edu.ng

Abstract

This study investigates the intersection of political advertising and adherence to regulatory codes within Nigerian elections, with a specific focus on the 2023 presidential election. Political advertising plays a crucial role in electoral campaigns, leveraging various platforms, including social media, to reach and influence voters. However, concerns arise regarding the compliance of these advertisements with the ethical guidelines set by the Nigeria Broadcasting Code (NBC), Advertising Regulatory Council of Nigeria (ARCON) and the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). This research aims to evaluate the extent to which political advertisements adhered to these codes and to assess the impact of the legal frameworks on political marketing strategies. This paper examines political marketing by utilizing research from various journals and papers, focusing on how politicians adhere to the rules and regulations provided by regulatory bodies. Preliminary findings suggest that while some political advertisements complied with NBC, ARCON and INEC regulations, numerous instances of non-compliance were evident, particularly in the use of misinformation and exploitative rhetoric. The study also highlights the challenges faced by regulatory bodies in enforcing these codes effectively. Moreover, the research explores how legal constraints influence the strategies of political marketers, revealing a tension between adherence to ethical guidelines and the competitive pressures of election campaigns. The findings underscore the need for stronger enforcement mechanisms, greater transparency, and enhanced public awareness to ensure ethical political advertising practices. This study contributes to the broader discourse on political communication and democratic integrity, offering insights and recommendations for improving regulatory frameworks and fostering more ethical political marketing in Nigeria.

Keywords : Marketing, Communications Rubrics Of Laws

331

IJEVSS, Volume 03 Issue 03, 2024



Copyright at authors some right reserved this work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/)

INTRODUCTION

Political advertising is as old as partisan politics. Political office seekers often seek the ubiquitous, cumulative, consonance-oriented advantages of the communications media to place their messages before the public in order to escalate their political value and chances of being accepted, adopted, endorsed, and possibly voted into power. The recurring decimal is the adroit deployment of information, facts, figures, images, and imagery often in hyperbolic and propagandistic proportions to persuade the electorate and other political, corporate, religious, and cultural elite. This practice is not strange to Nigeria's political sphere. However, over the years, the use of advertising in politics has become tense, acrimonious, and problematic. This spawned the enunciation of policies and regulations to order the political advertising terrain.

According to Nwokeocha (2012, p.343), "Political communication is premised on the inalienable right to inform and to be informed. The political actors and syndicates as well as media have the right to communicate their different messages to the people." By implication, political communication is a fundamental tool for democratic sustainability. This is so because it promotes and supports the right of citizens to know political happenings and events in society.

Political advertising is a very effective way to reach out to different segments of potential voters. Political actors try to get their constituents' attention and convince them that they are on the same side; that their political program or policy proposal corresponds with the individual's own personal interests. This is a legitimate aim, protected by the right to freedom of expression and freedom of information, and should even be encouraged, as it can stimulate political participation and the formation of political opinions. Nonetheless, to ensure free and fair elections, political advertisements must be regulated. With technological progress, advertising has changed significantly, which the regulation must take into account. Election campaigns are increasingly moving online, more specifically to social media platforms. According to the European Parliament Research Service, the estimated size of the online political advertising market in 2019 was around 100 million EUR. The way political advertising is being used today is far more sophisticated than it used to be. With the help of data firms and communications agencies, political actors can target people based on their personal data collected and made available by online platforms. With microtargeting techniques, advertisers can reach individuals based on algorithm-derived data about their possible interests (e.g. the platform's algorithm may deduce that you are pregnant because you typed baby diapers in your search browser). This way, political actors can segment people into homogeneous groups and send them personalized appeals to



support a particular candidate or policy proposal. This can have several harmful consequences. First, political actors may feed citizens only with information and arguments that reinforce their own existing beliefs. Instead of enriching political debate, it creates echo chambers and increases polarization. Second, political actors may engage in duplicitous campaigning, promising different things to different people. Third, political actors may decide to exclude certain groups of people from receiving their advertisements, which is discriminatory and violates their right to information. Multiple stakeholders, including Liberties, digital rights groups and the European Data Protection Supervisor (EDPS), have advocated for a full ban on these techniques, whether for political or commercial purposes.

In today's democratic dispensation in Nigeria, political parties and candidates have developed outstanding means of reaching the public. What was hitherto a herculean task has now become an easy click of the computer mouse, a simple sliding of the finger across a mobile phone or a simple click of the TV remote and surely a simple flip of the newspaper pages. Voters are constantly bombarded with political ads in the media for the sole purpose of getting their supports and votes. Political advertising refers to the systematic and non-personal messages on the media that is often paid for by an identified sponsor for the purpose of galvanizing supports and votes from the electorate. Ansolabere and Iyengar (2010) argue that political advertising (TV) has become a veritable tool for selling candidates of political parties during election campaigns. In the past two decades or more, the use of political ads to galvanize or gather supports from the electorates has witnessed a tremendous increase. This seeming paradigm shift may be as a result of the effectiveness of political ads and/or the sudden realization of the power of the media in changing the political dynamics, voter behaviour and decision making. Political ads have been found to be very effective in endearing political candidates and their parties to the heart of the electorate. Ansolabere and Iyenga (2010) are of the view that advertising campaigns are effective as they help position the candidate positively in the minds of the voters. They state that TV political advertising is persuasive and not manipulative, and that its messages inform voters about the candidates' position and allow voters to develop differentiated images of candidates. They add that although more involved and attentive voters learn more from competitive political advertising, people who do not pay close attention to campaigns, such as low income voters can benefit from the information in the advertising messages. The array of political marketing strategies provides information which voters need to assess candidate's capability in satisfying their needs. The contents of the campaign blue-print are the expressions of candidate's objectives



for seeking votes from the electorate (Owuamalam, 2014). It is therefore no gain saying that political ads have the tendency of influencing voter decision making. The debate has since shifted from the impact of political ads towards its effectiveness and the ethical implications of campaign communication strategies. There is no doubt that with the emerging new communication platforms, the dynamics of political communication cum advertising has changed and so has the advertising strategies. Today, politicians are willing to lie, tarnish the image of opponents, and exploit religious and ethnic sentiments among others in order to get the supports and votes they desire.

Problem Statement

Political participation is the only hope for like minds to install a new government in any democracy. Nigeria, like other puppet democracy in Africa is continually faced with leadership problems. It has been the hope of citizens to get trusted individuals at the helm of affairs in the country, but this dream has continually met deadlock. (Nwokeocha, 2023).

Political advertising has been a major route used by politicians to reach voters. They utilize various platforms to advertise and try to convince voters to support them for office. Social media, in particular, has introduced new political energy by mobilizing individuals for election participation and serving as a forum for public discourse. However, it is uncertain whether political advertising adheres to the codes and conduct of the Advertising Regulatory Council of Nigeria (ARCON) and the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), or if these codes were underestimated, especially during the 2023 presidential election in Nigeria. This study is established to address this uncertainty.

Objective of the Study

To evaluate the extent to which political advertising during the 2023 presidential election in Nigeria adhered to the ethical guidelines and regulatory frameworks established by the Nigeria Broadcasting Code (NBC), Advertising Regulatory Council of Nigeria (ARCON) and the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Political Advertising:

Political advertising is a key feature of democracies. Political parties, candidates, interest



groups, etc employ it to sell themselves and their programmes. Generally speaking, Hsu and Barker (2013) taking the perspective of its global proliferation, see advertising as an inseparable part of consumer business which plays an important communicative role in society. Citing Richards and Curran (2002) Hsu and Barker define advertising as, “a paid, mediated form of communication from an identifiable source, designed to persuade the receiver to take some action, now or in the future. They explain that advertisers craft messages in order to meet acceptable and desirable wants perceived by the audiences and by so doing reinforce subsisting value system as against the promotion of conflict. This view of advertising finds echo in Holtz-Bacha et. al. (2011) where they observe that, advertising should resonate with the audience if it is to be effective in addition to being meaningful to the people, loading up their norms and values, and address their affect. To them, advertising mirrors respective cultures, and we add democratic/political cultures, reflects the normative construct of society and in time, cultural change. To this end, political advertising mirrors political culture with ad copies addressing themselves to an analysis of the individual aspects of a political culture. Given the global and pervasive nature of advertising and the widespread use of advertising in political campaigns, research scholars have investigated the phenomenon especially as it regards effects of advertising during election campaigns, the forms and variations of negative political advertising, the impact of negative political advertising, or the use of advertising for election campaigns across countries.

Almost two decades ago, Procter and Schenck-Hamlin (1996) studied the forms and variations in negative political advertising. They used a sample of 99 political ads from 1990 statewide and federal elections and conducted a content analysis to test whether negative political ads featured a normative style. This study highlighted the following key conclusions: First, that “the presence of an average negative advertising model suggests that norms for negative advertising are established within the context of the campaign communication event itself... Candidates and consultants, within the campaign context, determine strategies which maximise their chance to win while minimising their opponent’s chance to win and rely on that formula in the construction of campaign advertisements”. Second, that political campaigning increasingly filled with formula-like negative ads reduce complex political problems to formulaic prescriptions with the tendency to minify the quality of political debate. Third, the narrow nature of normative negative ad targeting in the main, a candidate’s ethical behaviours apart from being most objectionable does not allow an evaluation and decision down to personal on varying political ideas and policies; reduces political choices, morality thus sparking off feelings of alienation from



the political system, and decreasing trust and faith in political personages.

In a another study dealing with television ads during the 2009 European election campaign involving France, Germany, Sweden and the UK, Holtz-Bacha et. al. (2012) focused on formal features, production techniques, content, personalisation, style/argumentation as well as visualisation. It also dealt with structural data of the TV spots, the most popular presentational formats, most important topics, and national or European angle. Regarding the thematic structure of the spots, the study found out that, “the dominant main issue in the spots of all four countries was the economy and financial policy, most notably in the German ads, where 47% of all sequences focused on economic matters. In the French spots, the economy was the most important policy issue as well with 29% of the sequence treating such topics. The case is similar for the UK spots, where 22%... dealt with economic issues. The Swedish spots featured the economy to a comparable amount (20%) yet focus here was on other, political problems, most importantly agriculture (30%) and social policy (20%). At the same time, social policy figured as the second most important issue in the spots of all four countries”.

In relation to the analysis of the perspective from which these topics were dealt with, the findings showed that in a comparison of the four countries, Germany and Sweden indicated two polarities, with Germany ads featuring the most national orientation (52%) while Sweden portrayed the strongest European perspective (67%). The study also showed that, “the ads in all countries relied on personalisation” to a considerable extent... indicated by the appearance of politicians in the visuals, a characterisation of advertising in party-oriented political systems. The study concluded that the findings confirm the potent, “relationship between the style and contents of political advertising and the specific culture of a country” (p.90).

Further studies, this time taking the experimental route to measure the cognitive and effective effects of political advertising during an election campaign, Daignault, Soroka and Giasson (2013) cashing in on the growing scientific interest in political ads investigated the immediate and simultaneous effects of positive, negative and mixed-content electoral ads. The study drew its data from a series of pretests of an experiment involving 31 voters in the 2011 Canadian Federal election. Measurements were based on ads’ argumentative content and non verbal cues whose impacts were tested with the use of innovative multimethod involving physiological and cognitive parameters. The Daignault’s et al.’s study reached three major conclusions as follows:



- Negative televised election ads generate raised attention levels and a greater degree of physiological activation in persons when compared with positive or mixed messages.
- Participants show beef up in cognitive elaboration while watching ads of their own political affiliations.
- Participants express more persuasive resistance to negative ad campaigns than to positive and mixed ads.

The authors surmise that these findings are strongly supportive of the several studies of political advertising hinging on the cognitive-response approach showing that negative ads produce the greatest counter arguments.

Also, de Run, Weng, and Ming (2013) studied the impact of negative political advertising in Malaysia. The study measured attitude towards the advertisements, advertisement likeability advertisement believability, positive emotional quotient towards the advertisement and its effect on actual behaviour. It examined data obtained from 150 respondents using descriptive, correlation and regression analyses among others. Nothing that, “negative campaign in Malaysia has been the mainstay of Malaysian politics for a long time”, (p.55), the study found out that the likeability of an ad is a measurement of positive emotional quotient but that the advertisement in the end did not achieve any changes in behaviour from non-affiliated voters and that only advertisement believability had a positive correlation with actual behaviour because it was crucial in transforming voters into action through limited to predisposed beliefs and amount of available information. The authors cautioned against recourse to negative political advertising as it raises more cynicism among voters. Rather, to them, advertisements that disseminate vital information such as on development issues relevant to people should be created.

Political advertising in Nigerian clearly appears to bear all of the issues raised in this review: issue based topics, negativism, personal attacks, etc. The extent of these characteristics is what this study is to determine. Perhaps, it is because of the prevalence of unwholesome political advertising also noticeable in Nigeria that prompted the Advertising Regulatory Council of Nigeria (established by Decree No 55 of 1988) to articulate rules on political advertising in its code. The guidelines are as follows:

Article 71: Political advertisements shall be issue-oriented and devoid of abusive statements and references. They shall not employ false, distorted and unsubstantiated claims or contain misrepresentations.

Article 72: Every political advertisement shall clearly identify the sponsoring



organisation/individual, visually/orally Political advertisements shall not explicitly or implicitly exploit ethnicity, religion, or any other sectional interests (ARCON, 2005). ARCON also requires that media houses, agencies, political parties politicians, and their agents ensure that their political ads be in consonance with the provision of the ARCON code.

Obot and Batta (2012) in their article, entitled, Scoping out the Adspace: Presidential Primary Election Advertising Campaign and regulation in Nigeria, the focus of investigation was the 2011 general election. In that study a content analysis of 96 issues of The Guardian, The Nation and The Punch for the period of December 13, 2010 to January 13, 2011 was conducted. A summary of the findings of the study was as follows:

- 103 political ads analysed from the three dailies showed 65% non issue-based copies while 28.2% dealt with economic issues.
- There was a general glossing over of issues concerning the compliance of political advertising to ARCON code.

The study points to a single advertorial by the National Broadcasting Commission restating its provisions on political broadcast materials based on the principles of pluralism and equitable airtime. It is true that advertising plays a significant role in society. Bardi (2010) has outlined those roles but we may extend those roles as they affect political advertising by stating that political advertising contributes to the political growth of a country, it helps political stakeholders especially the electorate to make political choices about political programmes, manifestoes, parties, candidates, policies and interests; it boosts the development of the media industry through advertising revenues that accrue to ad agencies and ad media; and generally enhances democratic, social, economic, and cultural values in a country. Therefore, to what extent is political advertising in today's Nigeria reflective of this ideal? To what extent is political advertising reflective of the provisions of ARCON code? Has anything changed between 2011 and 2015, 2019 and 2023? This study is designed to provide answers to some of these questions.

Political Advertising and Adherence to Codes of Conduct in Nigeria

Political advertising in Nigeria is a crucial element of election campaigns, utilized by political parties to promote their candidates and platforms. However, the adherence to ethical standards and codes of conduct in political advertising is often questioned. The intersection of political advertising with regulatory frameworks, ethical considerations, and its impact on democratic processes in Nigeria is a significant area of concern.



Regulatory Framework

Nigeria's regulatory framework for political advertising is primarily overseen by the Advertising Regulatory Council of Nigeria (ARCON), the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) and the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). ARCON provides guidelines to ensure that advertisements are truthful, fair, and respectful, while INEC oversees the overall conduct of elections, including the regulation of campaign activities.

Nigeria Broadcasting Code (NBC) for Political Advertisement

1. A Broadcaster shall ensure that a political advertisement:
 1. is guided by the extant Electoral law(s), The Code and other relevant regulations.
 2. clearly identifies the advertiser.
 3. in any form, does not exploit ethnic, religious or sectional interest.
 4. does not use minors.
2. A Broadcaster shall be free to sell airtime for the purpose of political campaigns provided that:
 - all messages shall be in the form of spot announcements or jingles not exceeding 60 seconds;
 - no broadcaster shall be involved in the production of such announcements or jingles no voice of any on-air staff of any broadcast station shall be used in political jingles;
 - all jingles and messages shall conform to the standards of truth, decency, good taste and morality.
3. A Broadcaster shall:
 - not deny any person, party or group a right of broadcast of a political advertisement.
 - ensure that no advertisement is accepted in a partisan political programme not permit any political campaign or advertisement on its facilities 24 hours preceding polling day or on polling day.
 - give equal access to all registered political parties or candidates on their facilities.
 - allot airtime equitably among the political parties at similar hours of the day.
 - allot equitable airtime to all political parties during prime times and at similar hours each day, subject to the payment of appropriate fees.
 - ensure equitable coverage of all political parties.



- not be employed or used to the advantage or disadvantage of any political party or candidate at any election.
- authenticate a purported withdrawal of a candidate in an election and ensure that the affected candidate personally endorses such claim.
- 4. The period of campaign through any broadcast media in any election by every political party shall commence 90days before polling day and end 24 hours prior to that day.
- 5. A Broadcaster shall ensure that a political advert/broadcast does not contain hate messages or speeches (jingles, campaigns and advertisements}.
- 6. A Broadcaster that contravenes the provisions of Sections1 to 4 above, shall be liable, in the first instance to a penalty of N500,000 and N1,000,000 for subsequent breach(es) or revocation of License

Despite these frameworks, enforcement is often weak, leading to widespread violations. Political parties frequently exploit loopholes in regulations, resulting in the dissemination of misleading and manipulative advertisements.

Ethical Issues in Political Advertising

- **Misinformation and Propaganda** : Political advertisements in Nigeria often blur the lines between legitimate promotion and propaganda. Techniques such as emotional appeals, misinformation, and selective presentation of facts are commonly used to sway public opinion. This manipulation undermines the electorate's ability to make informed decisions and distorts the democratic process (Ekwo, 2017).
- **Exploitation of Ethnic and Religious Divisions** : Nigeria's diverse ethnic and religious landscape is frequently exploited in political advertisements. Campaigns often employ fear-mongering and divisive rhetoric to gain political advantage, exacerbating social tensions and undermining national cohesion (Nwokeocha, 2023).
- **Lack of Transparency** : The sources of funding for political advertisements are often opaque. This lack of transparency raises concerns about undue influence and the potential for corruption. The absence of clear disclosure requirements makes it difficult for voters to assess the motivations behind political messages (Odebode & Fayomi, 2014).

Adherence to Codes of Conduct

The adherence to codes of conduct in political advertising is essential for maintaining the



integrity of electoral processes. However, in Nigeria, compliance is inconsistent, and violations are common. Several factors contribute to this:

1. **Weak Enforcement Mechanisms** : Regulatory bodies like ARCON and INEC lack the resources and political will to enforce compliance effectively. Penalties for violations are often insufficient to deter unethical behavior (Iyengar, 2016).
2. **Political Influence** : Regulatory bodies may be subject to political pressures, reducing their effectiveness in enforcing codes of conduct. This influence can result in selective enforcement and the overlooking of violations by powerful political actors (Ekwo, 2017).
3. **Public Awareness and Media Literacy** : Low levels of media literacy among the electorate make it easier for political advertisers to exploit misinformation and propaganda. Increasing public awareness about the importance of ethical political advertising is crucial for improving adherence to codes of conduct (Odebode & Fayomi, 2014).

Codes of conduct for political parties and political advertising (Campaigns) in Nigeria according to Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) 2018

PREAMBLE

WHEREAS there is need for peace and public order, freedom of political campaigns and compliance with electoral laws and regulations for the conduct of free, fair and credible elections in Nigeria. We the Political Parties of Nigeria have voluntarily set out in this code a system of rules to guide our activities and we pledge to one another and to the Nigerian people that we shall undertake to ensure that the code is fully publicized and brought to the notice of all officers and members of our Parties and that the contents thereof are fully observed by all. Accordingly we do hereby make and give to ourselves the following code of conduct: .

THE RULE OF LAW:

1. All Political Parties shall at all times uphold the rights and freedoms of the Nigerian people, as guaranteed by law.: In this context, every Political Party shall provide equal opportunity to qualified persons to participate in electoral activities.
2. All Political Parties shall abide by all the Laws, rules and regulations of Nigeria relating to elections and the maintenance of public order. In this regard, all the parties shall fully cooperate with the police in any investigation and processes of enforcement of the relevant laws, rules and regulations.



3. Subject to the relevant Laws and Regulations, all Political Parties have the right and freedom to put forward their views to the electorate without hindrance. For this purpose, every Political Party shall respect the rights of all participants in an election.
4. No Political Party shall use State apparatus including State owned print and electronic media to the advantage or disadvantage of any other Political Party or candidate at an election. That is to say, all ruling Political Parties shall allow other Parties equal and fair access to the use of State owned print and electronic media.
5. No Political Party shall engage in violent activity or intimidation of any kind, as a way of demonstrating its strength or supremacy. Accordingly, all Political Parties shall publicly condemn any form of political violence or intimidation in all its ramifications.
6. Every Political Party shall at all fora and at all times avoid defamatory, derogatory and insulting attacks on rival parties or individual personalities through any form of communication, verbal or written.

CAMPAIGNS:

- 1 No political Party or candidate shall during campaign resort to the use of inflammatory language, provocative actions, images or manifestation that incite violence, hatred, contempt or intimidation against another party or candidate or any person or group of persons on grounds of ethnicity or . gender or for any other reason. Accordingly, no Political Party or candidate shall issue any poster, pamphlet, leaflet or other publication that contains any such incitement.
- 2 All Political Parties shall take all necessary steps to coordinate their campaign activities in such a way as to avoid holding rallies, meetings, marches or demonstrations close to one another at the same time. Accordingly, whenever the date, venue or timing of any such activities of different Political Parties clash, their representatives will meet to resolve the issue amicably, without resort to intimidation, force or violence.
- 3 All Parties are required to file with the Commission details of their public rallies and meetings in any particular area.
- 4 No Political Party or any person or group of persons acting in its name shall obstruct, disrupt, break-up or in any way whatsoever interfere with a meeting, rally, march, demonstration or any campaign activity of another Political Party. In this regard, no party



or any person or group of persons acting in its name shall try to obstruct or prevent any person from participating in the activities of another party.

- 5 All Political Parties shall separate party business from government business. No Political Party shall use State vehicles, or other public resources for any electioneering campaigns or any other Party business.
- 6 Every Political Party shall expressly forbid its supporters from shouting its slogan, wearing its identifying colors or other paraphernalia to the rallies and any public gathering of other Political Parties.
- 7 All Political Parties shall instruct their members and supporters that no arms or any object that can be used to cause injury shall be brought to a Political rally, meeting, march, demonstration or any other political function.
- 8 No Political Party or candidate shall prevent other parties or candidates from pasting their posters or distributing their leaflets, hand bills and other publicity materials in public place. Furthermore all parties and candidates shall give' directives to their members and supporters not to remove, destroy the posters and other campaign materials of other parties or candidates.

ELECTIONS:

- 1 All Political Parties and candidates shall at all times cooperate fully with election officials in the performance of their lawful duties, in order to ensure peaceful and orderly elections.
- 2 Every Party shall instruct its members and supporters that no weapon or any object that can be used to cause injury shall be brought to the Polling Station, and that no Party attire, colours, symbol, emblem or other insignia shall be worn to a Polling Station on Election Day.
- 3 All Political Parties and their candidates shall extend all necessary help and cooperation to law-enforcement agents for purposes of ensuring the safety and security of election officials and Party Agents on polling day.
- 4 All Political Parties and their candidates shall instruct their agents in attendance at Polling Stations to perform their duties in accordance with the electoral laws and regulations, and to cooperate fully with the election officials for the efficient, transparent and uninterrupted conduct of the elections.
- 5 No Political Party and its agent shall engage in any of the following corrupt practices:



- i. Forcible occupation or invasion of a polling station.
 - ii. Encouraging its supporter to cast more than one vote (multiple voting).
 - iii. Encouraging any supporter to vote in the name of another person, living, dead or fictitious (impersonation).
 - iv. Buying votes or offering any bribe, gift, reward, gratification or any other monetary or material consideration or allurement to voters and electoral officials.
 - v. Offering any form of inducement to a person to stand or not to stand as a candidate, or to withdraw or not to withdraw his or her candidature.
 - vi. Canvassing for votes within the vicinity of a Polling Station on polling day
 - vii. Any other form of cheating or doing any act considered to be a malpractice under the electoral laws and regulations.
- 6 Every Political Party and its officials shall pay due regard to the law restricting access to the polling station to authorized persons only. Accordingly, no Party official shall enter any polling station on polling day without express permission from the Commission.
- 7 No official of a Political Party shall engage in confrontation or open argument with election officials at the polling station. To this end, any complaint, protest or challenge relating to processes and procedures at a Polling Station shall either be routed through the Party Agent to the Presiding Officer or shall be made directly to an officer of the Commission for appropriate resolution. Thereafter, an aggrieved party or person is at liberty to seek redress in Court.
- 8 Definition: code of conduct means "a set of rules of behavior for Political Parties and their supporters relating to their participation in an election process, to which the Parties ideally will voluntarily agree; and which may subsequent to that agreement be incorporated in law" .
- 9 We the undersigned representatives of the Political Parties hereby collectively subscribe to this Code of Conduct.

Theoretical Framework

To the extent that political advertising and news coverage of political events all constitute focus of political communication, this study is premised on three relevant theories as follows:



Functional Theory of Campaign Discourse:

Roberts (2013) in his article entitled, “A functional analysis comparison of web-only advertisements and traditional television advertisements from the 2004 and 2008 presidential campaigns;” explains that the functional theory of campaign discourse renders a helpful scheme to classify and synthesise political advertising. He adds that the assumption of the theory is that because elections are intrinsically competitive, political actors deploy campaign messages which include advertising to present a more preferable image of them. They use political ads to:

- Acclaim themselves with positive statements about their credentials as the better candidate,
- attack an opponent’s credentials, or
- defend with reputations against an opponents’ attack.

Candidates use those three functions for themes of policy or character. Policy themes can discuss actions or ideas related to governmental action related to past deeds, plans and general goals. Character themes can discuss the candidate’s perceived qualities related to personal qualities, leadership abilities and values or principles (p. 28). It would be interesting to see the extent of the use of self-acclaim, attacks, ethnic slurs, smear campaign, religious divisiveness, or issue-based topics relating to economic, social, cultural, political policies in the 2015 political/electioneering advertising.

Agenda Setting Theory:

There is no gainsaying the fact that there are various ways in which media agenda can be set. This can be done through focused news coverage, targeted editorial commentary, syndicated opinions and columns, cumulated messages, and consensus/consonance among journalists, widespread and penetrative advertising. Ragas and Tran (2013) remind us that, “agenda settings; central proposition remains unchanged: the elements prominent in the media’s picture of the world will over time become prominent in the public’s picture” (p.47a). They state further that: Agenda-setting scholars have identified two major types of elements: Object (such as issues politicians, brands) and attributes (i.e., the qualities and characteristics that help fill out the pictures of these objects. Through repeated emphasis on these elements... the media shape the salience of objects...; as well as the attributes the public associates with the objects.

The implication of this theory to our study is that by monitoring the character of political advertising in Nigeria as captured in the Nigerian newspapers, it may become possible to



determine the attributes of the campaign that are most dominant in the media and consequently extrapolate that the same attributes resonated or gained salience among members of the newspaper reading public.

DISCUSSION

Intense competition surrounding the election and the ultimate desire to be absolute winner creates a highly charged and negative form of campaigning usually heightened by the indiscriminate use of posters in advertising. This situation often leads to scuffles and disturbance of law and order between rival party agents. Although political propaganda or marketing was able to showcase and position the electorate to some extent, the negative aspect of these posters before and after election to the environment was adjudged by the majority of respondents as bad and embarrassing. Many view this as distasteful.

Advertising in advanced countries, is subject to both government regulations and industry self-regulation to prevent deceptive advertising. In the USA, Federal, State and City governments have passed legislations to restrict advertisements. State laws and enforcement bureaus impose additional regulations on certain types of advertising especially those involving contests. And in certain states' outdoor billboard are banned outright.

In Nigeria, there is the Advertising Regulatory Council of Nigeria (APCON), which is a body to regulate and standardize advertising practice. This body, however, Media Campaigns Against Drug Abuse and Use of Colorado (Colos) Among Youths in Nigeriadoes not seem to be doing much in regulating how propaganda posters printed by politicians are posted. There is an urgent need to evolve a policy that will restrict where and how adverts are being displayed. The ugly situation found before, during and after political elections leaves much to be desired. It is an assault on the built-environment and a defacement of our culture, a part of which our environment is as we know it. Any visitor to the environment before, during and long after an election, is bound to go away with an impression of a culturally-ugly built environment.

Furthermore, the environment is a cultural legacy we are leaving to the upcoming generations. If they do not know how an aesthetically pleasing environment should look like, the future generations are likely to perpetuate the ill that they are seeing now as the norm. Sustainable development has been defined as "development that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of the future generation to meet their needs (World Commission, 1987). For the future generation to be able to meet their culturally-aesthetic



environment there is a need to stop the ugly trend being created in the built-environment by political marketing posters. There is no gainsaying that democratic election as a means of choosing leaders in Nigeria has come to stay. The culture, though borrowed from the Western world, is being appreciated day-by-day. However, the appreciation and acceptance come with a negative price. This price is that, at every four years, the built-environments are destroyed, defaced and messed up by indiscriminate pasting of posters without any plan to restore the environmental aesthetics after the elections. To any tourist coming to our cities and towns, they may view our cities and towns as being dirty, unorganized as a result of these political propaganda posters. Note that the electorate are often disenchanted at the destruction of aesthetics of our beautiful cities by politicians and political actors during political marketing communications . The aftermath of these elections is an untidy, filthy and unsightly environment, with the buildings, immovable objects such as broken down vehicles, signposts, road signage, roundabout railings and bus-stops defaced with propaganda posters.

Majority of the respondents want government to take calculated and serious measures to stop future occurrences. It was also found that many broadcasters (broadcast stations) did not adhere to the NBC code that stipulates equal treatment for all political parties in terms of allocation of airtime. Stations showed biases based on the ruling party in the respective states. Again name calling and othe and insults and other negativities characterized the 2023 political marketing communications. This has to be checked by the regulators and this trend has to be nipped in the bud to give way to issue-based campaigns and issue -oriented political communication.

Recommendations

To improve adherence to codes of conduct in political advertising in Nigeria, several measures can be taken:

- a) Media proprietors and professionals should help reduce the incidence of non-compliant political ads by insisting on adherence to the code.
- b) Security agencies should apply punitive sanctions on political advertisers who disobey the laws on political advertising.
- c) ARCON should as empowered by law, penalise both the advertisers and the media firms that fail to comply with legislation on political advertising.



- d) The electorate should not support any candidate or party that gets involved in name calling, character assassination and other unethical practices and only support those who engage in issues -based political marketing.

CONCLUSION

Political advertising in Nigeria plays a vital role in election campaigns, but adherence to ethical standards and codes of conduct remains a challenge. Addressing these issues requires a multifaceted approach, including strengthening regulatory frameworks, enhancing transparency, and improving public awareness. By promoting ethical political advertising, Nigeria can safeguard the integrity of its democratic processes and foster a more informed and engaged electorate. Strengthening the electoral institutions in Nigeria would mean strengthening democracy in Nigeria and that would have positive effects in virtually all sectors of the Nigerian state.

REFERENCES

- ARCON (2005). *Code of Advertising Regulatory*. Lagos: ARCON.
- Bardi, J. N. (2010). *The role of advertising in national development* Benin Mediacomjournal, 1 -4: 71 – 78.
- Block, C. (2013). *A culturalist approach to the concept of the mediatization of politics. The age of Media hegemony*. Communication theory, 23 (3) 259-278.
- Couldry, N. & Hepp, A. (2013). *Conceptualising mediatization*. Communication theory, 23 (3) 191 – 202.
- De Run, E. C., Weng, J. T., Ming, L. W. (2013). *Negative political advertising. Its impact on voters*. Asian journal of business research, 3 (1) 82 – 96.
- Diagnault, P., Soroka, S., & Giasson, T. (2013). *The perception of political advertising during on election campaign: A measure of cognitive and emotional effects*. Canadian journal of communication, 38 (2) 167 – 186.
- Ekwo, U. (2017). *Media and elections in Nigeria: Issues and perspectives*. Journal of African Media Studies, 9(2), 185-203.
- Holtz-Bacha, C., Johanson, B., Leidenberger, J., Maarek, P. J., & Merkle, S. (2012). *Advertising for Europe. TV ads during the 2009 European election campaign in four countries*. Nordicom review, 33 (2): 77-79.
- Hsu, S. Y. & Barker, G. G. (2013). *Individualism and collectivism in Chinese and American television*



advertising. The international communication gazette, 75 (8) 695 -714.

https://www.inecnigeria.org/wpcontent/uploads/2018/10/Code_of_Conduct_For_Political_Parties_Preamble.pdf

Iyengar, S. (2016). Media Politics: *A Citizen's Guide*. W. W. Norton & Company.

Mattes, R. & Bratton, M. (2007). Learning about democracy in Africa: Awareness, performance and experience. *American journal of political science*, 151 (1) 192 – 217.

Nwokeocha, I. M. (2023). Cyber Politics And Voting Behaviour: An Exploratory Study of Social Media And Voters Mobilisation In The 2023 Presidential Election in Nigeria. *Indiana Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 4(12), 32-39.

Obot, C. & Batta, H, (2012). *Scoping out the Adspace: Presidential Primary election advertising campaign and regulation in Nigeria*. The Nigerian journal of communication, 10 (1): 158 – 177.

Nwokeocha, I. (2012). Political communication, the media and sustainable democracy in Nigeria. In Mbobo, M. & Batta, H (Eds). *The Companion to Communication and Development Issues*, 341-348. Uyo: BSM Resources Limited.

Odebode, D., & Fayomi, I. (2014). *The impact of political advertising on democracy in Nigeria*. *Journal of Media and Communication Studies*, 6(5), 78-85.

Procter, D. E. & Schenck-Hanlin, W. J. (1996). Form and variation in negative political advertising. *Communication research reports*, 13 (2) 147 – 156.

Roberts, C. (2013). A functional analysis comparison of web-only advertisements and traditional television advertisements from the 2004 and 2008 presidential campaigns. *Journalism and mass communication quarterly*, 90 (1), 23-38.

