

A Thematic Analysis of Political Animated Commercials of All Progressive Congress (APC) During 2015 General Election

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Abstract: In today's dynamic political environment, political parties are investing on advertising to promote and add value to their chances to win elections. Politicians have overtly acknowledged the power of advertising to influence the electorates to vote for them. This study conducted a thematic analysis of political-animated adverts of All-Progressive Congress (APC) during 2015 general election. The thrust of the study examined the principal objective, recurrent appeal and language representation of these adverts. Importantly, this study was anchored on the agenda setting and uses and gratification theories which provided a theoretical understanding of how political-animated commercials are potent political communication tools for influencing voter's decision. For this study, qualitative content analysis method was used to provide a thematic analysis of messages contained in political-animated adverts used during 2015 general election. The researchers selected all political animated adverts produced for APC during the 2015 election for sample in this study. Based, on the finding of the research, it was recommended that political animated adverts should be seen as a political branding strategy that can project a positive image or identity of a political candidate to the electorate as well as draw significant votes to the political candidate or political party.

Key words: Theme, analysis, politics, advertising and 2015 general election, APC, qualitative

INTRODUCTION

Political advertising has become an essential campaign strategy during election in any modern society. Scholars agree that political advertising is a crucial communication tool used by politicians to win the hearts of the electorates during elections (Asemah, 2010; Udeze and Akpan, 2013). From all-purpose perspective, political advertising is the use of advertising as a tool for promoting political ambition of individuals as well as their ideas, manifestos, plans and programs. In addition, political advertising is used to increase the awareness of people about a politician or political party as well as educate the people or citizens of the plan, programs and ideas originated by politicians or political party.

In Nigeria, the use of advertising in politics contributes towards the success of any politician winning any election. Asemah (2010) reasoned that "political advertising is used by politicians to persuade people to vote for them and it is therefore part and parcel of political process in Nigeria and any other democratic society. It is a very important source of information for voters. It is also the advertising that involves political parties presenting

candidates in order to win votes and be in power". In the same vein, Udeze and Akpan (2013) observed that "political advertising has no doubt served as a good political communication medium through which political candidates attempt to market themselves to the electorate. These persuasive messages produce varying reactions from different segments of the electorate, either in favour or against a candidate or political party". Thus, it is inevitable for a politician not to make use of political advertising in his or her quest to win elections. This is because political advertising serves as a potent political communication tool which can be used to promote the ideology of a politician in an excellent light.

Importantly, some politicians establish newspaper, radio and television houses to serve as a vehicle for political advertising as well as a megaphone for their political party. For example, Chief Gbenga Daniels established the national mirror which is a national tabloid used to propagate his interest and ambition. Chief Uzor Kalu established the Sun newspaper which he uses to expose the evils, drawbacks and weakness of his political enemies. Similarly, Chief Ahmed Bola Tinubu established the Television Continental (TVC), nation newspaper and

radio continental which serve as a communication platform to propagate the ideology of All Progressive Congress (APC).

During the 2015 elections, the All Progressive Congress (APC) adopted the use of animated political adverts to promote their presidential candidates during the elections. These political animated adverts were consistently aired on Lagos Television (LTV) and Television Continental (TVC) which were greatly influenced by the All Progressive Congress (APC). Interestingly, the use of animated-political adverts is a recent trend and its adoption contributed significantly to the success of president buhari during the 2015 election. This study conducted a thematic analysis of political-animated adverts of All Progressive Congress (APC) during 2015 general election. The thrust of the study examined the major pattern, recurrent appeal and language use of these adverts.

Objectives of the study:

- To identify the major pattern of political-animated adverts of All Progressive Congress (APC) during 2015 general election
- To assess the primary appeal used in political-animated adverts of All Progressive Congress (APC) during 2015 general election
- To determine the recurring language representation used in political-animated adverts of All Progressive Congress (APC) during 2015 general election

Research questions:

- What is the major pattern of political-animated adverts of All Progressive Congress (APC) during 2015 general election?
- What is the primary appeal used in political-animated adverts of All Progressive Congress (APC) during 2015 general election?
- What is the recurring language representation used in political-animated adverts of All Progressive Congress (APC) during 2015 general election?

Theoretical framework: For a better discussion on the nature of political advertising in Nigeria, two theories have been chosen. They are: agenda-setting and uses and gratifications theories.

Agenda-setting theory: This theory is attributed to two researchers Donald Shaw and Maxwell McCombs in the 1970's who studied people's reactions to election campaigns through the media in 1972. In this theory, "it is assumed that the more attention the media give to a topic, the greater is the importance attributed to it by the news audience" (McQuail, 2010). This simply put means that if the media give much air-time or space (in a repetitive

manner) to an issue or event it is seen by information consumers as very important (Baran, 2001). This theory is significant in this study because political parties in Nigeria can use political animated adverts to set political agenda for the public to follow. In other words, when there is a significant exposure of political-animated adverts in a repetitive manner these adverts would project a major idea of a political candidate in the minds of the electorate.

Uses and gratifications theory: In the views of the McQuail (2010), the major thrust of this theory is that audience members have certain needs or drives that are satisfied by using varied media sources. This theory is a version of "individualist functional theory" and that of "active audience theory" which has been used in the study of media effects on users. The question is not what media do to their scattered audiences but how they (consumers) made use of the media. This theory is appropriate in this study because the electorate make use of political adverts to analyze and evaluate political candidates to determine their preferred choice of candidate. By this their ideologies are also disseminated to the public.

Literature review: Political advertising is a form of advertising that contributes significantly to the image, identity and performance of politicians during the elections. Asemah and Edegoh (2012) reasoned that "Political advertising has become part of the political culture of most democracies and Nigeria as a democratic nation is not left out. Political advertising is one of the specialized areas of human communication and business". Thus, political advertising is an important communication tool need to promote polecat ideas in a political tense environment.

Udeze and Akpan (2013) observed that political advertising in Nigeria "is attributed to the developments in information and communication technology and the realization of the potent force of the media of mass communication in packaging not only products but ideas and political candidates. Electoral campaigns are marketing actions employed to get votes in elections". In essence, the emergence of information and computer technologies has propelled the development of political advertising in the Nigerian society. Importantly, Okwechime classified political advertising according to eight patterns.

Talking head advertisement: These are issues-oriented advertisements designed to enable the candidate project the image of one capable of handling the responsibilities of the political position sought. The emphasis is on ability to deliver on the job.

Concept advertisement: These are designed to convey important ideas about candidates, i.e., they are usually generational in nature and seek to avoid overly personalizing a campaign. Instead, they try to promote particular ideas which the candidate represents. Negative advertisement This is the type in which politicians contrive to smear or dent the image of opponents through mudslinging and attack on the opponent's record to gain electoral advantage.

Cinema verite: These are commercials which depicts the candidate in "real life" settings in which he or she is seen interacting with "the people". The tactics often employed particularly by incumbents is use of archive news footage to show candidate in presidential, gubernatorial and senatorial or other such activities.

Symbolism: Here, the advertiser avoid providing rational information about policy to the electorate. Rather, his or emphasis is on fear, anxieties and deep-rooted desires of a culture which are then associated with the candidate.

Power signification: This pattern of political advert exploits symbols of power and status to the advantage of the incumbent candidate or party a candidate in office invariably acquires significant experience and credibility which can be represented in advertisements by use of archive footage of press conferences, foreign tours, meetings with international leaders, war records, etc.

Testimonial: In this form of political advertising, the views of non-candidates are enlisted for the purpose of endorsement using the "vox pop" interviewing technique to demonstrate voter's support for a candidate or condemnation of an opponent.

Neutral reporter format: This, the audience is presented with series of apparently factual statements about a candidate (or opponent) and is then allowed to reach their conclusions. It uses the simple narrative conventions which tend to give the impression of neutrality whereas the facts presented are intended either to enhance the image of the candidate or to damage that of an opponent.

In political advertising, the linguistic nature of advert messages is a planned attempt to influence a group of persons to behave in a certain manner or think in certain way. The language of advertising is descriptive assertive, convincing and appealing. Therefore, connotative word, alliterative phrases, hyperbolic phrases and imperatives are common features of the language of advertising. Some advertisers also avoid direct statements in the process the

advertisers are only hinting on the desired conclusion. Their aim is to provoke viewers exposed to the advertised content to by themselves associate their products with qualities and draw implications about the product which is basically what covert advertising seeks to achieve.

Importantly, some linguistic devices can be used to understand language use and representation in political advertising. Adeyemo identified three major linguistic devices used in promoting representations in advertising they include.

Phonographological devices in advertising: The use of certain phonological devices as repetition of sounds are pertinent features used to create musical and aesthetics appeals as well as create certain emotions. Assonance is the repetition of internal vowel sounds which creates a melodious effect. Alliteration is the repetition of the same consonant sound at the beginning or end of two or more words in succession. Pun refers to a play on words which has the effect of inducing laughter. For instance slogans like "GLO with Pride" tend to make the slogans conversational and humorous.

Graphological devices: These devices include question mark, apostrophes. They are employed in advertising to request the reader's choice and to show omissions. The question mark shows degree of surprise even though questions in advertising are usually rhetorical. Apostrophe makes placements look conversational in nature. Also, wrong spellings are used to make a message informal and draw attention to the product.

Lexico-semantic devices: Lexical items in advertisements are often carefully selected to give clues to the advertiser's intention. They are selected, organized and deployed to get the reader's attention.

Review of previous studies: There have been several studies on the nature and influence of political advertising in Nigeria. While some of these studies focused on how political advertising have been used by politicians (Olujide *et al.*, 2011; Obot, 2013), others focused on the nature and importance in political advertising (Asemah, 2010; Asemah and Edegoh, 2012). A few studies examined political communication and the elections in Nigeria (Opebi, 2006; Nwosu, 2012). For example, Olujide, Adeyemi and Gbadeyan examined the effectiveness of political advertising on Nigerian electorates and problems associated with negative political advertising. The research was conducted through the administration of 1650 questionnaires to respondents in Ekiti State, Nigeria, out of which 1500 were completed and returned. Results

indicated that political advertising has significant effect on the electorates, the mean age distribution of electorates is not uniform and most participate in community development and other civic responsibilities. The study concludes that though political advertising is interesting, negative advertising should be totally discouraged.

Another study Asemah and Edegoh (2012) examined the new media as a tool for political advertising in Nigeria vis-a-vis, the challenges and prospects. The study was guided by the fact that the new media have become, so important in the dissemination of political activities. The survey research method was adopted, the questionnaire as an instrument of data collection. Two hundred copies of questionnaires were administered to the respondents, to elicit their opinions concerning the prospects and challenges of the new media as a tool for political advertising. Findings from the questionnaire administered to the two hundred respondents show that, the political parties in Nigeria recognise and make use of the new media for carrying out their political activities but this they do occasionally. Findings show that there are prospects and challenges of new media as a tool for political advertising in Nigeria. One of the prospects is that the new media can reach a very broad audience while one of the challenges is that the ability to constantly deliver messages via the new media is difficult. Based on the findings, the study concludes that the extent to which the political parties in Nigeria use the new media is minimal and therefore, recommends that political parties in Nigeria should give due attention to the use of the new media for the dissemination of political activities.

Interestingly, Obot (2013) examined the mass media electioneering campaign in Uyo (Nigeria) on voter's decision during, 2011 general elections this study found out that many factors come into play when voters make voting decisions. It also, found out that the effectiveness of mass media electioneering campaigns during the 2011 general elections in Uyo-Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria was moderated by many factors such as: monetary and material inducement, geo-ethnic consideration, perception of fairness and balance exhibited by the mass media in their coverage as well as the persuasiveness of the campaign messages. The study recommended that for the mass media to exert influence on voters' decision, they should exhibit fairness, balance, equal opportunity and access in their coverage of electioneering campaigns of all political parties and candidates.

In the same vein, Udeze and Akpan (2013) examined the influence of political advertising messages on the choice of governorship candidates by the electorate in Imo State, South East Nigeria, in the 2011 governorship election in the state. The study sought to ascertain the extent that the electorate in Imo State was exposed to

political advertising; which media was the electorate most exposed to in political advertising as well as the extent that political advertising influenced the voting decisions of the electorate. To achieve this, the study used the survey method with the questionnaire as research instrument. Through multi-stage sampling. About 120 respondents were selected in the two of the three senatorial zones in the state and administered the questionnaire. The findings indicated, among other things, that the electorate in Imo State was well-exposed to political advertising that radio was the most effective channel for political advertising that the respondents were influenced in their choice of candidates to the extent that they perceived such messages to be credible. In the light of the findings, it was concluded that political advertising was an essential factor in the political decisions of the electorate in Imo State. Similarly, it was recommended that candidates should strive for credibility in their political messages, while the electorate should be critical of all political messages to decipher the truth.

Despite, the several studies on the nature and influence of political advertising during election there is paucity of research investigation on use of political-animated adverts during election in Nigeria. This gap in research has triggered the need to engage in researches and literature related to political animated adverts. Thus this study explored a thematic analysis of political animated commercials of All-Progressive Congress (APC) during 2015 general election in Nigeria.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The qualitative content analysis method was adopted to examine the use of political-animated adverts of All-Progressive Congress (APC) during 2015 general election. The qualitative content analysis method examined the principal objective, recurrent appeal and language representation of these adverts. Thus, qualitative content analysis method was used to provide a thematic analysis of messages contained in political-animated adverts used during 2015 general election. The political-animated adverts were only aired on Lagos Television (LTV), Channels Television and Television Continental (TVC) all located in Lagos State, Nigeria. The units of analysis used in this study are advert patterns: These are different patterns of political advertising. These include talking head, concept, negative, cinema verite, symbolism, power signification, testimonials and neutral reporter format advertising appeals: these involve the type of appeal used in political commercials. These include logical, rational, musical, scarcity, fear, emotional and humour. Language presentation, this is the use of graphological devices, phonological devices, lexical semantics.

Table 1: Patterns of political-animated adverts

Advert patterns	Frequencies	Percentage
Talking head	8	66.7
Concept	2	16.7
Neutral reporter	1	8.3
Testimonial	1	8.3
Symbolism	0	0.0
Power significance	0	0.0
Negative advertisement	0	0.0
Total	12	100.0

Table 2: Appeals of political-animated adverts

Appeals	Frequencies	Percentage
Logical	6	50.0
Humour	4	33.3
Music	2	16.7
Fear	0	0.0
Scacity	0	0.0
Sex	0	0.0
Emotions	0	0.0
Total	12	100.0

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Patterns of political-animated adverts: Political advertising enables candidates to convey their positions on important issues and to acquaint voters with their accomplishments and personalities. Television advertising is especially effective for candidates running for national or statewide office because it can reach so many people at once.

From Table 1, the predominant pattern used in the political-animated adverts was talking head pattern. Despite, the eight patterns used in political advertising, that is: symbolism, testimonial, concept, talking-head, negative advertisement, power signification, neutral reporter format, the talking-head pattern had more than 65% content in political-animated adverts. The strength of this pattern was tied to issues-oriented advertisements designed to enable the candidate project the image of one capable of handling the responsibilities of the political position. The issues emphasized in these adverts were, free meal and education: some political adverts promoted the message that buhari/osibanjo administration will provide free meals and education to 10% million children in basic schools. The message stressed that it would be disadvantageous to continue to allow children street-hawk and remain hungry in the Nigerian society and president buhari will change this by providing free meal and education. Unemployment, some of the adverts emphasized the issue of unemployment and the need for skill and entrepreneurial development. The advert promoted the idea that president buhari will pay monthly salaries to graduates that completed the National Youth Service Corp (NYSC) and are yet to be employed for a period of a year as well as train these graduates to acquire entrepreneurial skills. Corruption-some of these adverts mentioned that corruption was the bane of the nation and there was a need to tackle corruption in the country. In sum, four major themes were emphasized on the talking-head pattern which were: education, unemployment, corruption and insecurity.

Appeals used in political adverts: In the field of advertising, an appeal refers to the approach used to attract the attention of consumers and/or to influence

their feelings toward the product, service or cause. It's something that moves people, speaks to their wants or need and excites their interest. These advertising appeals are essential to promote ideas, services and products in any political environment.

In advertising there are six different appeals used to promote ideas, products and services in the business world. Table 2 shows that 50% of the content of political-animated adverts had logical appeals. Also, 33.3% of the adverts were humour-related. The logical appeal used in these adverts focused on statistics, facts and logical arguments. This is because rationality is an important advertising appeal which provides enough information for people to justify what they want emotionally. When people decide to buy a product because they want it they will often seek information to decide which brand to buy. For example, some adverts emphasized the perennial issues facing Nigeria such as unemployment, insecurity, corruption and education; how these politicians plan to solve the problems. The presentations adopted for the appeals and themes found in the advertisements make for excitements and persuasion. For example, one of the adverts portrayed president buhari as james bond who was licensed to destroy poverty, unemployment, insecurity and corruption. Vice-President, Professor Osinbanjo was also portrayed as an assistant agent to destroy the societal vices in the Nigerian society.

Language use and representation of political-animated adverts: The language of advertising is always carefully chosen. It may be descriptive assertive, convincing and appealing. Consequently, connotative words, alliterative phrases, hyperbolic phrases and imperatives are common features of the language of advertising. Advertising is a field of discourse where language use is one of the principal tools for bringing goods or services to the knowledge of consumers in order to induce desirable actions. The language of advertising, therefore, must be persuasive and emphatic.

From literature, the three linguistics devices used in political adverts are graphological devices, phonological devices and lexical semantics. Table 3 shows that more than 57% of the language use in political animated adverts made use of graphological devices. These devices were

Table 3: Language use of political-animated adverts

Linguistic devices	Frequencies	Percentage
Graphological	7	58.3
Phonological	4	33.7
Lexical semantics	1	16.7
Total	12	100.0

used to emphasize logical appeal and reasoning among electorates that listen or view these political adverts. The question mark is employed in advertising to request the reader's choice. The semantic import of a question mark expresses not only the interrogative but also a degree of surprise, though the questions in advertisements are usually rhetorically. Examples of use of graphological devices in APC advert is "Are you in school now? Do not fear, keep calm there is hope after NYSC that you will know how to run your own business". Also, more than 32% of the language use in political animated adverts made use of phonological devices. An example of use of phonological devices in APC advert "A better life for Emeka", "Nigeria cannot go on like this. The APC government will change this, the APC government will give emeka, bisi, seun, odfai and every other Nigerian child a free school meal". Thus, the recurring language use in political animated adverts was graphological devices.

CONCLUSION

Political advertising is an essential political tool to win the hearts of the electorates during elections. The adoption of new technologies to reshape the political adverts has led to the emergence of political-animated adverts in the Nigerian political landscape. The study analyzed the patterns and context of political animated adverts and found out that this type of political adverts are potent tools used to capture the ideologies of a political candidate in the mind of the audiences. It is recommended that political animated adverts should be adopted as a political tool to communicate the ideologies

and plans of politicians to the electorate. Furthermore, political animated adverts should be seen as a political branding strategy that can project a positive image or identity of a political candidate to the electorate as well as draw significant votes to the political candidate or political party.

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