Effects of Political Advertising on Voters Participation in Elections:
A Study of 2019 General Election Participants in Anambra State

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ABSTRACT

The main objective of this study is to determine the effect of political advertising media on voters' participation during election in Anambra State. The specific objectives are to: determine the effect of social media exposure, political rallies, mass media and town crier exposure on voter apathy, cynicism and political efficacy. Using a survey research design, a sample of 400 was selected randomly from the three senatorial districts in Anambra state. Questionnaire was used to collect the data. Data were presented using tables, percentages and frequencies while the study hypotheses were analyzed usim Structural Equation Model in Smart PLS software. Findings from the study show that: Town crier had a significant positive influence on voters' participation; Political rallies had a significant positive effect on voters' participation; Social media (Facebook) had a significant positive influence on voters' participation; Mass media (Billboards) had a significant positive effect on voters' participation. The study concludes that political campaign advertisement increasingly diversifying, more complex and demanding and its importance in political advertising is increasing. Therefore, the study recommends that: political advertising media such as town crier, political rallies, Facebook, and billboards are reliable tools which can be used by political parties and candidates during electioneering campaigns.

Keywords: Political Advertising, Voters Participation, Elections,2019 General Election, Participants, Anambra State

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Over the years, there has been a rise in the use of advertising in politics (Batta, Batta, and Mboho, 2015). According to Kaid, Fernandez, and Painter (2011), political advertising remains the communication format that dominates presidential campaign budgets. The global and l nature of advertising and the widespread use of advertising in political campaigns have attracted lots of scholars to investigate the phenomenon especially as its effects during election campaigns across countries (Batta et al., 2015). Presidential elections in post-colonial Nigeria have always generated tensions, anxieties and controversies, particularly among the electorate. More so, a drastic downturn in participation in voting has been observed from existing literature. In 2011, it was recorded that registered voters were 73,528,040 in number while total votes (voter turnout) was 39,469,484, arriving at a participation rate of 54% (Isiaq, Adebiyi, and Bakare, 2018) which was lower than the 57.49% participation rate in 2007 (Agaigbe 2015). Likewise, the 2015 presidential elections recorded registered voters of 67,422,005, and the total number of votes cast was 29,432,083 arriving at a much lower participation rate of 44% (Isiaq et al. 2018).

The disturbing rise in disengaged and alienated citizenry which is evident indeclines in political participation, voter turnout, attention to public affairs media, and trust in government has left many scholars bemoaned, delving into uncovering the cause of the alarming conundrum in order to circumvent the situation (Yamamoto and Kushin, 2014; Moeller, Vreese, Esser, and Kunz, 2015).The epidemic of political

disaffection or disengagement is seen as negative attitudes that motivate or inhibit political participation (Pinkleton and Austin, 2004). Political participation in elections is usually influenced by voters' sense of civic duty (Feddersen and Sandroni, 2006), who understand the political process and keep informed about the actions of their government and public officials (Pinkleton, Austin, Zhou, Willoughby, and Reiser, 2012), a growing body of research have devoted resources to understand relationships that fuel contrary occurrences and trends as well as embattle them (Kaid, Fernandez and Painter, 2011; Moeller et. al, 2015).

Political advertising has been recorded to be a useful tool not only to boost citizen political efficacy, but also to convey candidate's message to the public and gain the attention of about seventy percent of voters (Kaid, Postelnicu, Landreville, Yub and Le Grangde, 2007). The mere fact that political actors invest considerable resources on ads suggests that they should have some influence on voters' intentions and choices (Durante and Guiterrez, 2014). Yet, empirical evidence in this respect is mixed, with most studies documenting small or short-lived effects (Durante and Guiterrez, 2014).

As a means of exposure and advertisement, mass media, in particular newspapers, have been found to play an important role in the development of political efficacy among citizens in the past (Chaffee and Kanihan, 1997), reiterating that the power to constitute a government rests in their votes. By watching news on TV and reading about the political world in newspapers, citizens familiarize themselves with political actors and processes and build political knowledge (Delli Carpini, 2000; Shah, McLeod, and Lee, 2009; Kaid, 2002; Valentino, Hutchings, and Williams, 2004). Over the course of years, they become increasingly confident about their skills to participate in politics and reach sufficient levels of political efficacy. However, this study is bent on uncovering the relationship between political advertising in campaigns and political participation using a sample of Nigerian electorates.

Statement of the Problem

Free and fair elections are one of the basic foundations of democratic societies. A free and fair election is not only about the freedom to vote and the knowledge of how to cast a vote, but also about a participatory process where voters engage in public debate and have adequate information about parties, policies, candidates and the election process itself in order to make informed choices (Ezegwu, Etukudo and Akpan, 2015).It is a fact that the political adverts through the media play an important role in the modern society as an avenue for information dissemination and attitude formation. Hence, harnessing the media, in form of political adverts, contributes substantially to creating an enabling environment for free and democratic elections, based on the well-informed electorate's decisions (Glavas, 2017).The in conclusive phenomena is whether these political advert campaigns delivered through the media really influences voters' political efficacy and participation in presidential elections.

People participate in presidential elections because their vote might be decisive. However, such an incentive to vote is unreasonable because in a national election, the probability that someone's vote will change the outcomes is essentially zero (Shachar, 2009). Hence, does political advert change this orientation in the minds of voters and still motivate political participation any ways? The repeated conundrum concerning the exposure to political advertising and political participation is that scholars often expect a strong and direct causal association between the two (Lau, Sigelman, and Rovner, 2007; Lin, 2014). However, empirical evidence suggests only a weak, non-existent, or even opposite relationship (Ojekwe, 2016). The inconsistency in empirical evidences has pioneered this study to empirically test the relationship between political advertising campaign and political participation.

Studies have suggested that the lack of in-depth coverage of public affairs and the emphasis of campaign coverage on tactics have alienated the citizenry, produced government distrust and reduced voter political efficacy (Brooks and Geer, 2007), most especially as political actors are usually protecting their personal interest instead of the public interest immediately after they get elected into positions (Pinkleton et al., 2012). In other words, when citizens know very little about the political affairs in the country, they are less

likely to participate. This speculation has no empirical backing, most especially regarding presidential elections in developing countries.

Additionally, the current study seeks an understanding of the behavioral consequences of the perceived influence of political ads on others regarding a person's voting behavior, that is, the tendency of acting based on your perception of other people's actions. Therefore, does this perceived influence determine voters' political efficacy? Does it affect people's perception of the effectiveness of campaign messages? And does it influence voters' intention? Numerous studies have debated the most effective way to model the presumed influence of media when examining its behavioral consequences (Schmierbach, Boyle, and McLeod, 2008; Sun, Shen, and Pan, 2008; Rojas, 2010). Some studies used the self-other perceptual differential, and others have used the perceived effects on others as predictors of behavioral outcomes (Gunther, Bolt, Borzekowski, Liebhart, and Dillard, 2006; Cohen, Tsfati, and Sheafar, 2008). However, the current study is concerned about the association of perceived effects of political ads on other voters and a person's likelihood of casting a vote in an election because electoral choices, like other choices in life, are made within a social context and are affected by social norms and perceptions and by expectations of how others will behave (Cohen and Tsfati, 2009).

Researchers have reported a positive relationship between self-reported exposure to political campaign messages and voters' sense of political efficacy, by extension, political participation (Groenendyk and Valentino, 2002; Lin, 2014). This finding was supported by Durante and Gutierrez (2014), whose study on political ads and voting intentions showed a positive relationship. On the other hand, political cynicism has been recorded to have a positive relationship with apathy (Pinkleton and Austin, 2004; Yamamoto and Kushin, 2014). More recent studies hold a contrary view as Pinkleton et al. (2012) reveals that no relationship exists between cynicism and apathy. Establishing relationships among these concepts and synchronizing the conflicting findings of researchers has inspired this study.

Based on the findings of studies regarding the influence of presumed influence, and given the ubiquity of presidential campaign advertisements during election periods, voters inevitably assume that other voters are highly affected by campaign messages (Lau, Sigelman, and Rovner, 2007). In other words, voters exposed to these messages are expected to form certain expectations regarding the exposure of other voters to the messages; as well as the extent to which the adverts might influence other voters(Lau et al., 2007). Lin (2014) hypothesized that increased voter exposure results in increased perceptions of the voter exposure of others, based on the concept of presumed reach. Presumed reach is an underlying assumption that suggests that with greater exposure to media messages, individuals assume these messages reach a wider audience of others (Gunther et al., 2006). However, could this be the case with presidential elections campaign messages?

For decades, researchers have examined the tendency of people to assume that persuasive messages have a greater effect on others than on themselves. As a result, people might react based on their perceptions of the persuasive effects of a message on others (Lin, 2014). In essence, citizens may form a behavior based on the effect that they think that the political campaign message has on other citizens. Gunther and Storey (2003) referred to this effect as the influence of presumed influence. Subsequent studies on the effects of presumed influence in other disciplines have suggested that people's perceptions concerning the effects of persuasive messages on people and society also affect their attitudes, choices, and behaviours (Tsfati, Ribak, and Cohen, 2005; Gunther, Bolt, Borzekowski, Liebhart, and Dillard, 2006; Paek and Gunther, 2007). However, with regards political advertising messages, can it be said that the influence of presumed influence affects voters' participation in elections?

The findings of Lin (2014) showed a positive association between the amount of exposure of others with the perceived media influence on others, leading to a greater sense of political efficacy. Lin (2004) also suggested that the amount of exposure that voters have to presidential election advertisements is positively

associated with the amount of exposure they believe other voters have to the same types of messages. Furthermore, the amount of exposure that voters perceive other voters have to presidential election advertisements is positively associated with the degree to which they perceive the effectiveness of presidential election advertisements in changing other voters' voting decisions. These findings were results of their study of voters in Taiwan, a developed nation. Will this be the case in developing countries like Nigeria?

In their study of political advertising in the United States of America, Kaid et al. (2007) noted that if political participation continues to decline, political and economic degradation may become irreversible. In as much as older voters have always participated in larger numbers than younger ones, what is dangerous for the US democratic system is the current pattern of civic disengagement in which nonvoting young citizens are growing into disengaged older citizens (Kaid et al., 2007). In the words of Kaid et al.(2011), there is still much we do not know, however, on the role of political adverts on voter motivation and eventual participation. Hence, there is the need to examine voters' perception of the effect of political adverts on voter participation.

Objectives of the Study

The primary objective of this study is to examine voter perception of the effect of political advert campaign on voter participation in presidential elections. The specific objectives include to:

1. To determine the influence of social media on voter apathy to presidential elections in Nigeria.
2. To ascertain the influence of social media on voter cynicism to presidential elections in Nigeria.
3. To examine the influence of social media on political efficacy of presidential elections in Nigeria.
4. To determine the influence of exposure to town crier to voter apathy to presidential elections in Nigeria.
5. To ascertain the influence of exposure to town crier to voter cynicism to presidential elections in Nigeria
6. To examine the influence of exposure to town crier to political efficacy of presidential elections in Nigeria.
7. To determine the influence of political rallies to voter apathy to presidential elections in Nigeria.
8. To examine the influence of political rallies to voter cynicism to presidential elections in Nigeria.
9. To ascertain the influence of political rallies to political efficacy of presidential elections in Nigeria.
10. To determine the influence of mass media to voter apathy to presidential elections in Nigeria.
11. To ascertain the influence of mass media to voter cynicism to presidential elections in Nigeria.
12. To examine the influence of mass media to political efficacy of presidential elections in Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following are the research questions guiding the study:

1. How do social media influence voter apathy to presidential elections in Nigeria?
2. How do social media influence voter cynicism to presidential elections in Nigeria?
3. How do social media influence political efficacy of presidential elections in Nigeria?
4. How does exposure to town crier influence voter apathy to presidential elections in Nigeria?
5. How does exposure to town crier influence voter cynicism to presidential elections in Nigeria?
6. How does exposure to town crier influence political efficacy of presidential elections in Nigeria?
7. How do political rallies influence voter apathy to presidential elections in Nigeria?
8. How do political rallies influence voter cynicism to presidential elections in Nigeria?
9. How do political rallies influence political efficacy of presidential elections in Nigeria?
10. How do mass media influence voter apathy to presidential elections in Nigeria?

11. How do mass media influence voter cynicism to presidential elections in Nigeria?
12. How do mass media influence political efficacy of presidential elections in Nigeria?

Research Hypotheses

Based on the objectives and research questions, the following hypotheses (null) ensue:

1. Social media has no significant influence on voter apathy to presidential elections in Nigeria.
2. Social media has no significant influence on voter cynicism to presidential elections in Nigeria.
3. Social media has no significant influence on political efficacy of presidential elections in Nigeria.
4. Exposure to town crier has no significant influence on voter apathy to presidential elections in Nigeria.
5. Exposure to town crier has no significant influence on voter cynicism to presidential elections in Nigeria
6. Exposure to town crier has no significant influence on political efficacy of presidential elections in Nigeria.
7. Political rallies have no significant influence on voter apathy to presidential elections in Nigeria.
8. Political rallies have no significant influence voter cynicism to presidential elections in Nigeria.
9. Political rallies have no significant influence political efficacy of presidential elections in Nigeria.
10. Mass media have no significant influence voter apathy to presidential elections in Nigeria.
11. Mass media have no significant influence voter cynicism to presidential elections in Nigeria.
12. Mass media have no significant influence political efficacy of presidential elections in Nigeria.

Scope of the Study

The study focuses on the effects of political advertising campaigns on voters' participation in elections. The study is constrained to presidential elections in Nigeria. In addition, the content scope of the work revolves mass media, social media, political rallies and town criers as independent variables while cynicism, apathy, and political efficacy are dimensions of the dependent variables. The model of media effects on political participation is adapted to suit the hypotheses and research questions in the study.

Significance of the Study

The increasing relevance of enhancing political participation has triggered this study that explores the effect of political advertising campaign on political participation. This study is relevant in ensuring national democracy survival because low political participation, if not remedied will be the doom of any nation. The findings of this study will serve as a critical guide in key public relations and media policy decisions. Advertising regulators such as APCON will be able to make policies to enhance or minimize the frequencies and durations of political ads. Aspirants for political positions will also find this work useful as it will guide them through voters' participation and how it can be influenced. Furthermore, this work will add to the body of existing knowledge as a reference material for subsequent research in this dimension.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction

This section is divided into three major segments; the review of concepts, review of theories and empirical studies. Relevant literatures were critically examined in line with political campaign advertisement and voters participation, bringing to bare the concepts of cynicism, apathy, political efficacy, and presumed influence. This is aimed at understanding the different perspectives of various scholars and studies on issues bothering the research theme. It ends by summarizing the reviewed literature and stating the observed

knowledge gap which this study seeks to fill.

Review of Concepts

Elections in Nigeria

Elections are one of the basic foundations of democratic societies (Glavas, 2017). According to the book – *Comparative Politics*- by Johari (2011), election is the process of choosing leaders, who will represent the interest of the public in a democratic process where a legitimate change of government is constitutionally allowed. Osinachukwu and Jawan (2011) sees election as a post mortem that investigates the record of office holders whose actual performance may have little to do with promises made when they were previously elected in order to repose function in a ruler that is popularly accepted and eject an unpopular leader. Elections constitute an essential principle in liberal democracy. Election in a democracy is very important because it is through which that the expression of the people are shown via legitimacy and leadership succession.

In Nigeria, election has been the nomenclature since 1922 through 1960 when the political independence was gained from Britain (Sule, 2019). Even after the political independence, election took place in 1964 but the democratic regime was short-lived because of the military coup. In 1979, Nigeria abolished the parliamentary system of government and switched to presidential system. Relying on two major legal documents, which are the 1999 Constitution as Amended and the Electoral Act 2010, elections in Nigeria take place at different levels. In the Fourth Republic, from 1999 to the 2019 General Elections, seven levels of electoral offices constitutionally exist and they comprise of the Presidential, Senatorial, Federal House of Representatives, Gubernatorial, State House of Assembly, Chairmanship and Councillorship (Nigerian 1999 Constitution as amended). In the opinion of Sule (2019), one of the most interesting facets in Nigerian politics is the Presidential Election, and it is because of the voting pattern and political behaviour exhibited by the Nigerian voters. This makes the battle for the Presidential seat intense, chaotic and threatening, sometimes to the extent of national disintegration.

The sole responsibility for electoral administration in Nigeria resides with an Electoral Management Body (EMB), which has undergone several changes in nomenclature under different regimes, but not as many as the changes to its structure (Omotola, 2013). Between 1959 and 1999 the EMB was renamed six times. It was called the Electoral Commission of Nigeria (ECN) from 1959-1963; Federal Electoral Commission (FEC), 1963-1966; Federal Electoral Commission (FEDECO), 1976-1979. During the Babangida regime (1986-1993) it was renamed the National Electoral Commission (NEC). General Sanni Abacha (1993-1998) replaced the NEC with the National Electoral Commission of Nigeria (NECON), while General Abdusallami Abukakar, Abacha's successor (1998-1999) rechristened it the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) (Agbaje and Adejumobi 2006; Omotola, 2013).

The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) is the body saddled with the responsibility of conducting elections in Nigeria. As at the time of this study, the INEC chairman was Mahmood Yakubu, who was appointed to office by President Muhammadu Buhari on the 21st of October 2015, succeeding Amina Zakari, who served as acting Chairman. The INEC organizes activities such as the registration and de-registration of political parties, regulation of the conducts and activities of contestants and political parties and designing of regulations for the voters towards the conduct of the election proper. The INEC has been perceived as one of the challenges of electoral conduct in Nigeria due to alleged corruption, partiality, irregularities, shoddy preparations and lack of expertise and professionalism among others (The Centre for Public Policy Alternatives, 2015; Sule, 2019).

Researchers have emphasized some weaknesses in the composition and activities of the INEC (Omotola, 2013; Iwu, 2008). Osinachukwu and Jawan (2011) is of the opinion that the rules guiding elections are

ambiguous, ever changing or easily maneuvered; the electoral regulations and rules is institutionally less effective; the political bigwigs are the gladiators in their conduct; hence the electorates are often powerless as they live in the mercy of the political stalwarts and political outcomes. Omotola (2013) believes that INEC has been severely constrained with respect to capacity. One indicator of this is the appointment of people without professional and intellectual competence to man the body. For instance, Professor Maurice Iwu, the immediate past chairman, has neither professional nor intellectual experience in electoral management – he was trained in the health sciences. The second indicator is INEC's reliance on the use of ad hoc staff, who are usually partially briefed for a day on their duties, and after every flawed election INEC tends to place most of the blame on these temporary employees (Iwu 2008). Worse still, researchers opine that INEC reflects the centrist proclivities of the federal democracy, with its over-centralization of power (Omotola, 2013). Furthermore, the electoral body which would have been neutral, and ensure a free and fair elections have been biased because in some cases, they are employed by some power brokers to serve as a rescue mission to some illegitimate candidates to the detriment of popular candidates and Nigerian electorates (Osinachukwu and Jawan, 2011).

Ethnicity, religion, and regionalism have shrouded the political culture and voting pattern in Nigeria, developing into catastrophic issues that are bedeviling the successful choice of good leaders in the country (Abdullahi, 2015). Closely knitted to the above is the politics of winning at all cost where elections in Nigeria are marred with violence, vandalism, manipulation of results, rigging, and intimidation of opposition and their supporters using the apparatus of security personnel and political thugs (Falola and Heaton, 2008; Auwal, 2015), endangering the lives and properties of electorates an non-electorates alike. Election in Nigeria took the dimension of money politics where vote buying, bribery, corruption, god fatherism, overspending, violation of electoral rules and other irregularities affected the process and its outcome (Sule, Azizuddin, Sani, and Mat, 2018). Nevertheless, elections can be held peacefully, safely and fairly if the process of the conduct is improved. One of the ways is to prevent rigging through e-voting which will make the voters' choice to count and to ensure policy compliance from the politicians (Sule, 2018). Also, aggressive public awareness creation on the evil consequences of involvement in rigging, violence and all sorts of manipulation from the electorates, could also reduce the tendencies of unfair elections. Furthermore, election can be held safely if the politics of ethnicity, religion and regionalism are mitigated.

Presidential Election in Nigeria kicked-off during the Second Republic (1979-1984) when the country dropped the parliamentary system of government after the bloody coup in 1966. From 1979 till date, Presidential Election has taken place nine (9) times in the history of the country. The first two elections occurred in the Second Republic in 1979 and 1983. Another took place in 1991 during the Aborted Third Republic which was eventually annulled. In the Fourth Republic, six (6) Presidential Elections took place during 1999, 2003, 2007, 2011, 2015 and 2019.

An analysis of the Presidential Election in Nigeria will truly reveal a pattern of voting behaviour guided by ethnic, religious and regional belongings. For instance, the 1979 Presidential Election showed that the three major contenders; Alhaji Shehu Shagari of National Party of Nigeria (NPN), Obafemi Awolowo of Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN) and Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe of the Nigerian Peoples Party (NPP) ammased their votes from their respective political regions. This was also replicated in the 1983 Presidential Election (Akinboye and Anifowose, 2008; Sule, Azizuddin, Sani, and Mat, 2017). In the Fourth Republic, the Presidential Election was contested six times in 1999, 2003, 2007, 2011, 2015 and 2019 and all the contests present ethnic and religious influence among the voters either directly or indirectly (Sule, 2019).

In 2011, President G. E. Jonathan from the South contested under the platform of Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), while Muhammadu Buhari under the Congress for Progressive Change (CPC). The votes were shared regionally with Buhari winning in the North and Jonathan in the South. Jonathan won the contest.

According to Nworah (2011), the 2011 presidential election had its peculiarities. Because Good luck Jonathan had not been elected president during his first term, he was faced with the task of convincing the electorate that he was a better choice than his strongest opponent. This he did by investing a lot of funds into media campaigns, which included traditional media and the new media.

The 2019 Presidential Election saw another dimension where the two major strong contenders; President Muhammadu Buhari of the APC and Alhaji Atiku Abubakar of the PDP emerged both from the North. Not only are they both from the Hausa/Fulani ethnic group, but they are also Muslims by religion. The voting pattern indicated a surprising result where the Hausa/Fulani Muslims voted massively for President Muhammadu Buhari while the Northern Christians and the South south and Southeast voted for Atiku with the votes split between the two in the Southwest (Sule, 2019). The fact remains that both contenders invested handsomely in political advertising campaigns, synergizing the effects of political rallies, television ads and the internet.

Political Advertising and Campaigns

Politics in Nigeria is usually expressed through political parties, which are created to achieve political power. Political parties are structured around specific ideologies and ideas of human societies, these ideas and ideologies are communicated to members of the party, the voters, and other members of the public as a means of campaigning (Ezegwu, Etukudo and Akpan, 2015). Political campaign is an organized effort by a political party or candidate for public office to attract the support of voters in an election (Gingsberg, 2009). Comprising of five basic elements: professional public relations, polling, broadcast media, direct mail and the internet, researcher say that political advertising is just an element of political campaign (Ginsberg, 2009; Olujide, Adeyemi, and Gbadeyan, 2011), and political advertising has become major tool used by political parties and leaders to present candidates and influence the electorates voting decision (Ojeka, and Ajakaiye, 2015).

Advertising has become imperative in politics such that it will be difficult to divorce advertising successfully from politics (Ezegwu et. al, 2015). Underscoring the relevance of political advertising in the current Nigerian political dispensation, Alawode and Adesanya (2016) noted that political advertising is not unconnected to the realization of effective political socialization and mobilization. This re-echoes an earlier assertion by Richard Nixon – a former President of the United States of America- that political advertising is to politics what bumper stickers are to philosophy. (Tejumaiye, Simon, and Obia, 2018; Ezegwu and Ezegwu 2014).

Alawode and Adesanya (2016) described political advertising as a form of campaign used by political candidates to reach and influence voters. It is a subset of advertising described by Arens (2008) as a structured and composed non-personal communication of politics-based information, usually persuasive in nature and usually paid for by identified sponsors, through various mass media. According to Ojeka, and Ajakaiye (2015), political advertising is the purchase and use of advertising space, paid for at commercial rates in order to transmit information on political issues, either in the form of the overview of past achievements of the incumbent government or appealing messages in support of a particular political party. Similarly, Political advertising is the use of paid media space or airtime to educate voters about a candidate and persuade voters to vote a political party or candidate into power or office (Onuorah, 2008). An extensive body of research supports the finding that exposure and attention to political advertising leads to increased voter knowledge about candidates (Groenendyk and Valentino, 2002; Kaid, Fernandez, and Painter, 2011).

The power to persuade the voters, according to Anyacho (2008) rests in the ability of the political party or the aspirant from the party to articulate sellable ideas and programmes which must be packaged to suit the needs of the electorate. Hence, political advertising aims at informing, educating and persuading the electorate to favourably support the idea of a particular candidate or party (Asemah, 2010; Ezegwu, Etukudo

and Akpan, 2015).

Political advertising is simply the application of persuasive marketing techniques to present political ideas to the public (Ezegwu and Ezegwu, 2014). It is an approach to market the ideals and unique selling propositions (USP) of aspirants of political positions in order to gain an advantage in winning an election. Political advertising can either be positive or negative (Hakan, 2016) or can be based on or information or persuasion (Martin, 2014). Hence, political advertising presents a wonderful opportunity for politicians, advertising practitioners and public relations experts to direct the campaigns of candidates and parties on substantive issues which relate to the welfare of the people and the development of the nation. The debate on the role and place of advertising in political communication continues to generate global attention, and Nigeria is no exception (Ojeka, and Ajakaiye, 2015).

In Nigeria, political advertising has grown immensely in the past two decades (Ojekwe, 2016). In the past, election campaign strategies focused mainly on personal contact and political rallies. However, since Nigeria's transition from military rule to a democratic dispensation, the use of political ad campaigns has become increasingly popular, probably a result of the increased awareness of the power of the media (Ojekwe, 2016). Media outlets, such as billboard, radio, television, posters, handbills, radio, television, billboard, oramedia, social media, and even the vast internet outlets are at the main-stream of disseminating information by political party and allies (Ezegwu and Ezegwu 2014). Olujide, Adeyemi and Gbadeya (2011) asserts that political advertising is the use of the above-mentioned media platforms by political candidates to increase their exposure to the public. Their study observe that the wide adoption of television and radio has supplanted direct appearances on the campaign trail, which was popularly used by politicians in the past five decades.

According to Ezegwu et. al,(2015), professional political advertising was not used in all the general elections organized by the colonial administration. The marketing of political ideas during that period was through rallies and speech presentations at both the national and local levels. It was after the beginning of a political system in Nigeria, in the early 1960s, that some semblance of political advertising started appearing in Nigerian politics. In 1963, Chief Obafemi Awolowo, as the leader of the Action Group, used Sky writing advertising during rallies to send campaign messages. This contributed positively to the application of political advertising in the country. During the electioneering year, 1979, the media option had widened and more political parties resorted to political advertising. By this time, Nigeria had experienced a period of oil boom with the attendant expansion in commerce, thus, some politicians realized the value of marketing politics (Ezegwu et. al, 2015).

Media coverage is the very lifeblood of politics because it shapes the perceptions that form the reality on which political action is based. In terms of Media influence globally, political advertising may not influence people with strong opinion on a candidate, but can be a deciding factor among the undecided voters. In presidential race where less than 1% of the electorates can determine the outcome of election, media influence can be significant (Ojeka, and Ajakaiye, 2015).

Over the years, the amount of resources spent for political campaigns has grown steadily both in mature and consolidating democracies (Kaid, Fernandez and Painter, 2011; Durante and Gutierrez, 2014). A large fraction of campaign money is spent to purchase political advertising on mass media, with television usually getting the lion's share. Political advertising remains the communication format that dominates political campaign budgets (Kaid et. al, 2011). Political advertising has become an integral part of politics in Nigeria to the extent that electorates sometimes weigh the seriousness of candidates and political parties against the background of the level and pattern of advertising employed (Tejumaiye, Simon, and Obia, 2018).

It is commonly believed that political advertisement served as a spring-board to a positive election outcome to party that engaged the medium of mass media (Ojeka, and Ajakaiye, 2015). In the Presidential elections

conducted in Nigeria in 2011, major election stakeholders such as the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), Political Parties, and Civil Society Organizations widely used political communication and advertising to share political-related messages through the media platforms for interrelated objectives. Media outlets, through political advertising, are used to educate prospective electorates on the values, mechanisms and procedural guidelines that relate to voting as well as electoral process monitoring during the election period. This is usually done by the electoral body- INEC and the Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), while political parties involved in political advertisement solicit majorly for electorates' support.

Of the several political parties and candidates that featured in the 2011 Presidential election, the few dominant parties such as; Peoples Democratic Party (PDP)-Good luck Jonathan; Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN)- Nuhu Ribadu; Congress for Progressive Change (CPC)-Gen.

Muhammadu Buhari (Rtd); and National Conscience Party (NCP)- Dele Momodu, engaged in several political advertisements as a tool to appeal to voters and influence their voting behaviour and decision in order to ensure their emergence at the helm of political power in Nigeria (Ojeka and Ajakaiye, 2015). During elections, the electorate is exposed to many communication messages about the various candidates, political parties, their philosophies and ideas, the electoral umpires and the electoral processes, instigating a sense is a war for the minds of the electorate. The battle is fought in the fields of paid advertisements, probably, the struggle to win public support for political goals may be achieved through political advertising (Ezegwu et. al, 2015).

Researchers agree that the winning or losing of elections depends largely on the ability of the campaign managers to use communication effectively (Okigbo, 1992; Ezegwu et. al, 2015). Nwosu (2003) contends that politicians rise to power because they can talk persuasively to voters and political elites. Ezegwu et. al (2015) remarks that political advertising is a special type of advertising which calls for high strategic thinking and action initiative. It starts with the objective analysis of the image and appearance of the candidate involved (in the case of human product) or the evaluation of the programme in respect of the issues at stake (in the case of political programme merchandising). Scholars and practitioners alike agree that political advertising is important for every electioneering campaign.

Incessant debates about the effectiveness of political advertising campaigns in truly achieving is objectives have heralded the political ads literature. Ansolabere and Iyengar (2009) posit that negative advertising actually discourages people from going to polls to vote and diminishes confidence in the political system. In essence, political ads have an effect on voters.

Supportively, Owuamalam (2002) notes that political advertising influences voters' behavior because political advertising introduces political discourse, since it calls for a verdict on issues concerning the public. In a study conducted by Tejumaiye et al (2018), almost half of the respondents (49%) asserted that political advertising was the sole factor that influenced their voting choice. On the contrary, Ojeka, and Ajakaiye (2015) opine that election campaign strategies rarely influence the outcome of elections.

The Internet as a tool for Political Advertising Campaigns

Political advertising campaigns have migrated from the old print method to digital techniques as a result of improvement in technology and the growing population of technology savvy voters. The use of television, which is arguably the central source of information for most citizens has decreased significantly, while the adoption of the Internet is growing (Pap, Bilandzic and Ham, 2018). The Internet is becoming an increasingly important source of information for younger people, as well as the source of political messages at the time of election campaigns. The use of the Internet for political purposes has become a pivotal part of the political environment over recent election cycles (Smith, 2009). Traditional Internet information sources such as online editions of news organizations, and candidate websites and software applications have

become a frequent repertoire of political information sources for many citizens (Yamamoto and Kushin, 2014).

During the 2019 presidential elections in Nigeria, citizens increasingly resorted to social media for candidate and campaign information, posting and exchanging political messages, and getting involved in a campaign (Smith, 2011). As such, scholarly interest in the political utilization of the Internet and social media has grown tremendously in recent years. In studying the role of the Internet in politics and public affairs, scholars have discussed different aspects of online media, finding that different online media relate to different user outcomes at cognitive and behavioral levels (Shah, McLeod, and Lee, 2009). Furthermore, scholars have broken down Internet use into information-seeking and interpersonal interaction (Katz, Rice, and Aspden, 2001; Shah, Cho, Eveland and Kwak, 2005). In other words, electorates do not only use the internet technology to obtain information about aspirants and political parties, but also use the internet to communicate with each other and form opinions as well as influence opinions and choices of other citizens.

In recent years, a new era of online communication technology termed social media has emerged. Social media is increasingly becoming a critical element of human society by changing our social norms, values, and culture (Chukwuere and Chukwuere, 2017). Information sharing and the distribution of content are becoming important social desires (Abbas, Aman, Nurunnabi and Bano, 2019) and the social media delivers these desires (Stathopoulou, Siagmaka and Christodoulides, 2019), by revolutionizing methods of everyday communication, collaboration, information consumption and sharing (Suseno, Laurell and Sick, 2018). There has been an unprecedented increase in social networking both in developed and developing nations in the past few years as a result of change in lifestyle, advent of online education and tech-savvy generation (Biswas and Roy, 2014). The world has become a global village and technology use has made it a smaller world through advancements in social media (Abbas et al., 2019).

Social media includes all technology that facilitate social interaction, make collaborations possible, and enable deliberations across stakeholders. Social media includes such tools as electronic blogs, audio/video tools (YouTube), Internet chat rooms, cellular and computer texting, and social networking sites (Chepkemoi, Situma and Murunga, 2018). Nielsen (2017) takes the concept a bit further as he articulates that the contents generated by social media users, such as comments, posts, digital photos, video sharing, and all online interaction data, are critical and represent the lifeblood of social networking and social media sites. Several scholars have attempted to define social media, but the most adequate description and definition of social media came from Andreas Kaplan and Michael Heinlein (Abbas, Aman, Nurunnabi and Bano, 2019), as a gathering of internet tools and applications typically based on the philosophy underlying Web 2.0 and the mechanical establishments that authorize the creation, sharing, and the trade of user-produced content or site-generated data.

The Internet has been highlighted as a key location for active political information search because Delli-Carpini, 2000; Zhang and Pinkleton, (2009) opine that it allows citizens to obtain more updated and detailed information. Active information searchers have been shown to have a lower level of disaffection, likely due to increased interest and more satisfying and fulfilling information search results (Pinkleton and Austin, 2001). In addition, diverse information sources allows users to acquire various ideas and perspectives that might not receive enough attention in offline platforms. Thus, using traditional Internet sources may help direct users to the political process and lower cynicism and apathy. Previous studies have examined the effects of social media use on political outcomes. Extant literature yields mixed results with regard to the political utility of social media. Some studies have shown that political use of social media platforms enhances citizens' political participation (Gil de Zuniga et al., 2009; Park, Kee, and Valenzuela, 2009; Utz, 2009). These studies tend towards the democratic prospects of social media platforms given their capacity to lower barriers to information, enhance online communication, expression, and discussion, and presumably enable all citizens to participate in the democratic process (Castells, 2007). Thus, social media platforms are

seen as places of interactive equality where all users can and may participate as unrestricted equals (Gil de Zuniga et al., 2009).Literature evidence also suggests a positive relationship between political Internet use and political cognitions and behaviors, including internal and external political efficacy, knowledge, political participation, and voting (Gil de Zuniga et. al, 2009; Johnson and Kaye, 2003; Wang, 2007; Kushin and Yamamoto, 2010; Zhang and Pinkleton, 2009).

Despite several studies appraisal of the positives of social media, recent evidence questions the actual democratic nature of social media. Rather than facilitate the participation of all citizens, some researchers posit that social media may foster social fragmentation, whereby users retreat into social media sites to gather content that supports their viewpoints and engage in partisan expression with like-minded individuals (Baumgartner and Morris, 2010; Towner and Dulio, 2011; Woolley, Limperos, and Oliver, 2010). In studying a group of social media formats, Groshek and Dimitrova (2010) found that there was no relationship between social media use and political knowledge, campaign interest, as well as voting likelihood. Also, Baumgartner and Morris (2010) reported that social network site use was unrelated to offline political participation. More recently, in Towner and Dulio (2011),the exposure to YouTube's political channel had no effect on candidate evaluations and external political efficacy.

Political Efficacy and Political Participation

Political efficacy has been studied for over 65 years, since Campbell, Gurin and Miller introduced the concept in 1954 (Anma, Munck, and Zetterbeg, 2004). These political efficacy pioneers defined the concept as the feeling that individual political action does have, or can have, an impact upon the political process, hence, it is worthwhile to perform one's civic duties. It is the feeling that political and social change is possible, and that the individual citizen can play a part in bringing about this change (Campbell, Gurin, and Miller, 1954 in Amna et. al, 2004).As observed from the Campbell et al. definition, political efficacy was originally defined in one-dimensional terms. However, researchers have demonstrated that political efficacy contains two separate components: (1) *internal efficacy*, that refers to the individual's belief about his or her own competence to understand and to make a difference in political matters, and (2) *external efficacy*, that refers to the individual's belief that decision makers will listen to citizens' opinions, that is, that the political system is responsive. In other words, it is primarily dealing with the responsiveness of governmental authorities and institutions to citizens' demands (Moeller, Vreese, Esser, and Kunz, 2014). Closely related to the former component is *information efficacy*, a concept put forward by Kaid et. al, (2007) that describes citizen voters' confidence in their own political knowledge (Moeller et. al, 2014). In a study by Opdycke, Segura, and Vasqez (2013), political information efficacy is concerned with the trust and faith a citizen has in a body of government that influences their civic participation based on their personal understanding, as well as their faith that they can influence political affairs.

Political efficacy is at the core of beliefs and values needed to participate in a democratic society. It is a personality trait that influences the degree to which citizens participate in politics throughout their lives (Moeller, Vreese, Esser, and Kunz, 2014). Therefore, political efficacy entails the development of the feeling that political and social change is possible, and that the individual citizen can play a part in bringing about the change. During campaigns, political information is disseminated to all citizens via various medium, therefore, political efficacy is a factor that can affect voter turnout (Opdycke et. al, 2013). Political efficacy is all about a voter's confidence in their political information. Hence, since there are different sources for obtaining political knowledge, the amount and quality of information gained influences political efficacy (Pinkleton and Austin, 2001). Research shows that a voter who is well informed about the election would most likely vote. Therefore, if the media disseminates information that appeals to citizen's lives, as well as address the public and civic issues at hand, then there will be an enhancement in political efficacy (Pinkleton and Austin, 2001).

However, in a study conducted by Kaid, Postelnicu, Landreville, Yun, and LeGrange (2007), a young

voter's efficacy is determined by his/her effort to access the various avenues of political knowledge. These researchers found that young voters are less likely to feel confident about their political knowledge, which then makes them less likely to vote. Their perceived lack of knowledge is due to the lacuna in understanding all of the issues, therefore some would rather not engage in the political process. Several studies are conducted to discover the predictors that influence citizens' engagement in political process through voter participation. As a result of these studies, it has been found that voting is one way to measure an individual's expressed belief (internal efficacy) of their influence on the political process (Hackett and Omotto, 2009). Interestingly, Hackett and Omotto's (2009) research also highlights that the actual act of voting is much more important to people, than the results of the election. This act is exclusive of one's personal feelings and abilities to participate in the political process.

Previous studies also indicate that political efficacy is not only influenced by media channels, but also by the "sense of community" matters in political behaviors and attitudes (Anderson, 2010). An individuals' social environment may influence daily life decisions. Sense of community is the feeling of belonging that members have, a feeling that members matter to one another and to the group, and a shared faith that members' needs will be met through their commitment together (Opdycke et. al, 2013). Further support of this sense of community factor is seen in the study conducted by Nickerson and Rogers (2010).

Concept of Political Cynicism and Political Participation

Drawing from other researchers, Fu, Mou, Miller and Jallete (2011) asserted that in the 1950s and early 1960s, the public was relatively efficacious and trusting towards the government. However, since then, the public trust in government has been nose-diving. Parallel to the low trust in government, the past two or three decades also witnessed a trend of decline in political participation (Macedo, 2005; Mindich, 2004), which is often called "spiral of disaffection" and has attracted a great deal of scholarly attention.

Existing literature define cynicism as the degree of negative feeling toward the government, as well as the belief that the government is not functioning and producing outputs in accordance with citizens' expectations (Fu et. al, 2011). It is also the lack of confidence in, and a feeling of distrust toward, the political system, government officials, and related institutions, including the media (Pinkleton et. al, 2012). Cynical voters are found to believe that the political system and governments are corrupt and problematic and they cannot be trusted. The more cynical voters become, the less likely they are to engage themselves in political activities. Ultimately they averse to political processes (Pinkleton and Austin, 2004).

As far back as 1974, Miller (1974) argues that dissatisfaction with policy alternatives proposed by two major political parties leads to cynicism. Many years later Craig et. al (1990) opined that cynicism is more likely to arise due to dissatisfaction about issues among issue-oriented voters and disagreement with incumbents' approaches among incumbent-oriented individuals. In other words, cynicism has different individual antecedents. Political cynicism also has been found to differ by nationality (De Vreese and Semetko, 2002). In short, literature suggests that there are individual, national, contextual differences to political cynicism and involvement, echoing the concern that individual differences have often been neglected in cynicism research (Pinkleton, Austin, and Fortman, 1998).

Pinkleton and Austin (2004) measured political cynicism by asking respondents whether they agree or disagree on such general statements as: politicians are out of touch with the real world and politicians only care about their special interests. Since 30 years, reserchers have kept saying that political cynicism boils down to a lack of trust or confidence in political institutions and incumbent politicians (Cappella and Jamieson, 1996; Craig, Niemi, and Silver, 1990; Pinkleton et. al, 2012). As a result, political cynicism is also conceptualized as lack of trust towards politics and politicians in this study.

Scholars have linked cynicism to negative political campaign tactics by the news media (Ansolabehere and

Iyengar, 2009). Televised news is blamed for its emphasis on candidate images rather than substantive campaign issues. Over the course of time, the news media's horse-race and image-oriented coverage corrodes the public confidence in politics, creating disaffection towards politics in the country. A growing body of research suggests that political disaffection is very complex and it is an oversimplification to only blame news media for voter malaise (Pinkleton and Austin, 2001). Although citizens indicate that negative political advertising is unethical and uninformative, research indicates that negative advertisements do not necessarily discourage political participation but may instead lead to greater voter turnout (Goldstein and Freedman, 2002; Pinkleton, Um, and Austin, 2002). Thus citizens' reported negativity towards political news coverage does not imply that they will give up voting altogether (Austin and Pinkleton, 1995).

Existing literature reveals the dynamic and complex nature of political cynicism and its impact on the political process. Earlier studies have consistently shown that political cynicism is the reverse of political involvement (Pinkleton, 1999; Pinkleton and Austin, 2002, 2004). Politically cynical citizens are known to be shut off from political activities and information. On the contrary, politically involved individuals are active information seekers and they are open to public affairs information from the news media. Earlier studies reasoned that political cynicism represents a deep-seated distrust and negativity toward political institutions and politics (Miller, 1974). The lack of trust distances cynics from meaningful political participations. In that vein, political cynicism is associated with decrease in political involvement (Mindich, 2005; Opdycke et al, 2013).Political cynicism has been shown to affect voter turnout, but results are mixed on whether the effect is negative or positive. Some studies show that the more politically cynical a respondent is, the less likely they are to vote (Pinkleton and Austin, 2004). Others have found that political cynicism may actually increase a respondent's likelihood to vote because cynicism does not lead to apathy, but instead to critical thinking about politics (Vreese and Semetko, 2002; De Vreese, 2005; Fu et al., 2011). Hence, proponents of the later ideology believe that cynical individuals can be politically mobilized given proper conditions. The reason why cynical individuals are also politically involved could be due to the fact that they are cynical but not apathetic (Fu et. al, 2011). Put differently, citizens can be cynical to the extent that they retain some interest in politics. In de Vreese's terms, it may be that voters have the capacity to distinguish between their cynical views of politics and the importance of participating in an election.

Previous researchers have shown how age, income, and political affiliation related to the political cynicism of a respondent (Agger et al., 1961 in Opdycke et al, 2013). While these variables are still pivotal in the formation of political cynicism, the media has become more pronounced, drawing attention and leading many researchers to believe that the most important variables in relation to cynicism are information efficacy and media exposure levels (Adriaansen, van Praag, and de Vreese, 2010; Fu et al., 2011).Current studies on political cynicism focuses on what the public knows and how the public receives their information. In relation to political information efficacy, the popular view is that the more the public thinks they know, the less cynical they will be (McKinney and Rill, 2009). However, some researchers have found the opposite to be true. For instance, Hanson, Haridakis, Cunningham, Sharma, and Ponder (2010) revealed that the more a respondent thought they knew, the more politically cynical the respondent would be. One possible reason for the rise in cynicism in relation to political information efficacy is that some viewers may realize they are not receiving the full story. Also, Valentino, Beckmann, and Buhr(2001) found media framing to be a major factor on political cynicism, therefore, less educated and nonpartisan respondents, in particular, were less likely to vote after viewing the coverage. This shows that political cynicism levels may be less about how informed a person is, but instead more about how interested a person is in politics.

Political Apathy

The general lack of interest and indifference toward politics is referred to as political apathy (Pap, Bilandzic, and Ham, 2018). High levels of political apathy can be hazardous in a democratic system because it can lead to stagnation in the growth and development of the entire country (Pap et al, 2018). There is a limited

number of literature regarding the study of political apathy and it has not been so often directly defined and conceptualized (Pap et. al, 2018). Most studies about political apathy are seen as lack of motivation of an individual to engage in politics or a lack of political participation (Henn, Weinstein, and Forrest 2005; Marsh, O'Toole, and Jones 2007; Wattenberg, 2012; Dalton, 2013). However, a number of studies indicate that political apathy should be measured and defined as a separate concept. An apathetic individual has a low level of political awareness and knows enough about it to make the conclusion that he is not motivated for a greater degree of engagement (Pap et al, 2018). In today's technologically developed world where information is often only a "click" away, an individual does not have to make a significant effort to access them. Access to information, even to political ones, is usually a matter of choice. Hence, political 'apatheism' is usually a matter of choice and not coercion. Supporting this logic, Wattenberg (2012) claims that just because political information exists at the tip of people's fingers does not mean that it will be used. If they do not read newspapers, do not watch television, or follow current events through any other media, even the most educated individuals will not learn much about the political world. This argument is based on observing consumption of news as a habit (Wattenberg, 2012; Graber, 2002; Putnam, 2000). It is appalling that less and less younger generations develop the habit of reading online newspapers, listening to news on YouTube or watching television news (McLeod, 2000; Graber, 2002; Wattenberg, 2012). Although most young people use the internet and social networks on a daily basis (Bakker and de Vreese, 2011, Norris, 2001) most of them do not use these model media as a source of political information.

Researchers believe that political awareness affects the development of political interest and political knowledge and thus, citizens' level of involvement in politics as it makes them aware of the situation around them, informed about political events and ways they can influence it (Casero-Ripolles, 2012; Wattenberg, 2012). More so, individuals with heightened susceptibility and knowledge about political events are more willing to discuss politics with their peers which can develop their political interest and involvement in politics (Wattenberg, 2012; Van Deth, Abendschon, and Vollmar, 2011). Consuming political news increases the perception of political efficiency in citizens because they have greater knowledge of political processes and political issues (Wattenberg, 2012; McLeod, 2000).

Concept of 'Influence of Presumed Media Influence'

According to Cohen, Tsfati, and Sheafer (2008), it has been over three decades since Davison (1983) suggested that: "In some cases, a communication leads to action not because of its impact on those to whom it is ostensibly directed, but because others (third persons) think it will have an impact on the audience" (p. 1). This idea, now coined as "the influence of presumed influence" (Gunther and Storey 2003), has been extensively revisited in recent years in various aspects of social life. Literature points out that people act upon their perceptions of media influence regardless of whether or not these perceptions are accurate. Put differently, "the myth of media impact is influential. Hence, people who perceive that mass media can powerfully influence others may, often quite sensibly, react to that perception themselves (Gunther, Bolt, Borzekowski, Liebhart, and Dillard, 2006).

Presumed influence emphasizes the third-person effect hypothesis, which suggests that people believe the "greatest impact" of the media will not be on "me" or "you," but on "them" – third persons (Lin, 2014). Following the logic of the third-person hypothesis, in addition to solving the paradox regarding whether a direct causal relationship exists between exposure to media negativity and political participation, Lin (2014) explored how voters' perceptions of the effect of negative campaign messages on others might motivate them to vote on election day, an indirect effect of media messages.

Lin (2014) asserts that the influence of presumed influence is particularly relevant in evaluating the effects of media messages on political participation. Though researchers have emphasized the importance of presumed influence in detecting the true strength and direction of the relationships between exposure to mass media and political participation, they have also said that the importance does not elude the ideology

that negative media campaign messages has direct influence on voter turnout, irrespective of presumed influence. Negative advertising could just as likely stimulate turnout as demobilize it.

Review of Theories

Information Processing Theory

The information processing theory was developed by William McGuire as a cognitive and systematic way of analyzing information leading to attitude change (Tejumaiye, Simon and Obia, 2018). The theory presents a 7-step sequence in information processing with one leading to the other (Anaeto, Onabajo, and Osifeso, 2008). It begins with exposure, then comprehension, retention, retrieval, decision, behaviour, to reinforcement. Baran and Davis (2009) describes the theory as computerizing and reductionist. They assert that the theory equates humans with computers, possessing the ability to screen sensory information, filtering only a small percentage of information that they are exposed to, and remembering only a minute fraction. They further state that this is done almost unconsciously with humans having little power over information processing.

One fundamental assumption of information processing is that humans are exposed daily to more messages than they can deal with. This is usually the case during elections, where a lot of candidates are attacking the media with so much information, making it congesting and tasking for electorates to comprehend, digest, and remember. Hence, when voters come in contact with new information, they need a basis on which to evaluate it. This explains why people who have prior knowledge tend to evaluate contestants immediately using information processing, while others who lack it are only able to process information after spending considerable time assessing contestants to make up for their lack of sufficient knowledge (political efficacy) (Hong and Sternthal, 2010). This corroborates the research of Palomo, Martinez, and Bosch (2015) which draws on researchers' agreement that people with superior knowledge tend to be open to persuasive communication when it comes in the form of information and not manipulation.

Several researchers have applied the information processing theory in understanding relationships between constructs. For instance, in extending information processing to how Americans evaluate black leaders, Carton and Rosette (2011) upheld the theory of information processing and provided a 'how and why approach' to the fact that Americans use goal-based stereotypes in their evaluation of the successes or failures of black leaders. It would seem that this pattern also finds expression in the realm of political advertising.

The theory of information processing was used by Tejumaiye, Simon, and Obia (2018) to assess the 'Influence of political advertising in Nigeria's 2015 Presidential election in Lagos state' examining the role political advertising played in the said election. The study adopted this theory in the formulation of research questions such as: Did political advertising messages alone influence voting decision of the electorates in the 2015 Presidential election? What other factors, besides political advertising, influenced voting decision in the 2015 Presidential election? What were voters' perceived intentions of political advertising messages in the 2015 Presidential election? What was the behavior of voters towards political advertising messages in the 2015 Presidential election?

More so, Franz and Ridout (2007) observed that the influence of political advertising is moderated by high exposure to information with those having little exposure being the most susceptible to political persuasion through advertising. Greene (2011) however distinguished between the information processing approach in advanced and developing countries. He noted that people react to great exposure to political messages in two ways. First is according to their existing store of information and the less of this that voters have, the more they are susceptible to changing their minds in an unbalanced information environment. Second is that voters evaluate political messages based on partisan bias such that those who do not have this bias evaluate

messages on opposing candidates in an independent manner, while those who hold this bias evaluate messages based on their pre-existing notion? In a place like the United States of America for instance, voters have a huge store of political information, making it possible for them to hold partisan views such that campaigns and adverts have little influence on them. But in developing countries where different parties constantly rise and fall and where people have a reduced information store and less political leanings, advertising can have a significant influence on voters.

In light of these researches, this current study adopts the Information Processing model's 7-steps to understand electorates exposure to political advertising campaign messages and how their process and perceive these messages, as well as the resultant effect in their voting intentions and behaviour.

Model of Media Effects on Political Participation

The model of media effects on political participation was coined from Lin's (2014) study of the actual and perceived influences of campaign messages. The study established the model to study the exposure of voters and the perceived exposure of other voters to political campaign messages; and the extent to which the messages might influence other voters. The model is adapted to suit the hypothesis of this study and it is diagrammatically represented thus:
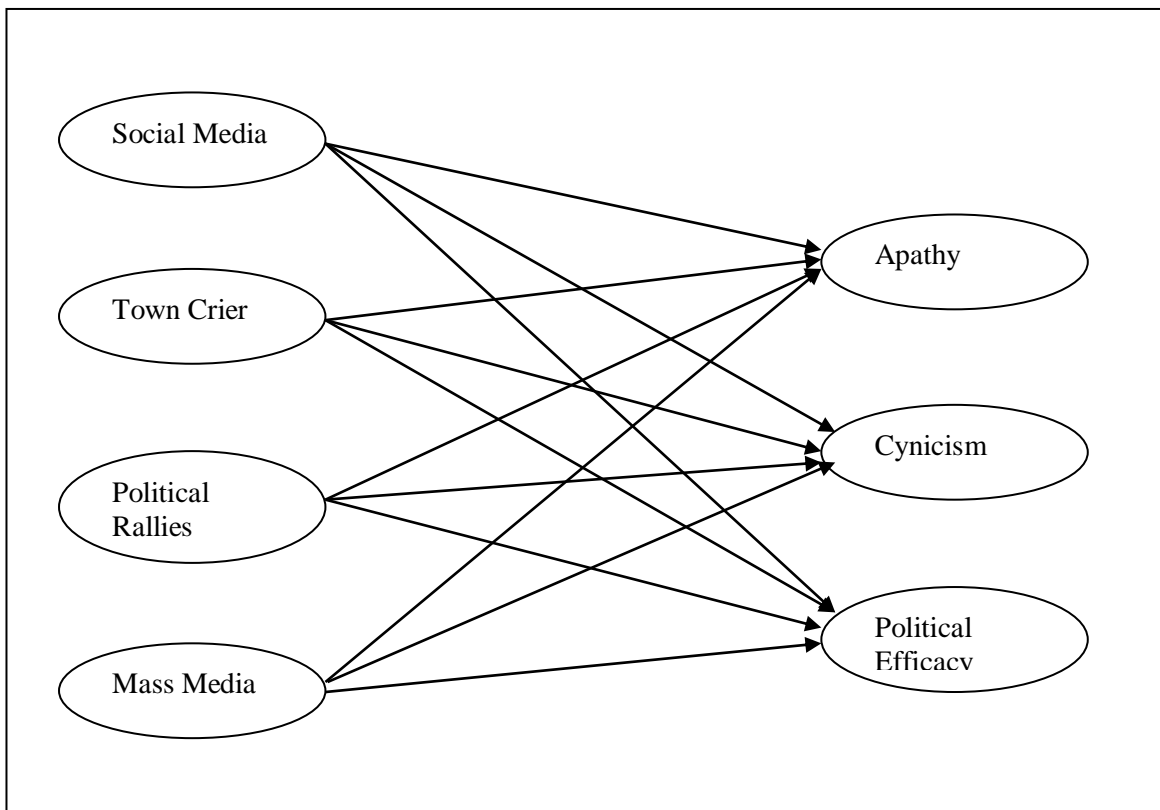
Figure 1: Conceptual Model of the Study

Adapted From: Lin, S. (2014) Media Use and Political Participation Reconsidered: The Actual and Perceived influence of Political Campaign Messages. *Chinese Journal of Communication*, vol. 7:2, pp. 135-154.

Several researchers have incorporated the model in their study to understand perceptual influences. For instance, the model was adapted in Cohen, Tsfati, and Sheafar (2009) to study the influence of presumed influence with regards politician's' perception of media power. Also, Gunther, Bolt, Borzekowski, Liebhart, and Dillard (2006) adapted the model in their study of 'Presumed influence on peer norms: how mass media

indirectly affects adolescent smoking'. Lin (2014) adopted the model in assessing the relationships between exposure and apathy, exposure and cynicism, cynicism and apathy, apathy and efficacy, cynicism and efficacy, presumed influence and efficacy, exposure and others' exposure, efficacy and voting intentions, and many other politically-related relationships, hence, its suitability for this study.

Review of Empirical Studies

Several studies have sought to understand the dynamics and perceived effect of political advertising campaign on political participation, bringing to bare the issues of political cynicism, political apathy, political efficacy, the influence of presumed influence, and how these variables relate to one other.

Taking a look at the study of 'Nigerian electorates' perception of political advertising and election campaign' by Olujide, Adeyemi and Gbadeyan (2011), a positive relationship is observed between political advertising and electorates' participation in politics. Similarly, Lin (2014) carried out a study concerning 'Media use and political participation: the actual and perceived influence of political campaign messages'. In this study, the major objective was to determine the effects of political disaffection, presumed influence, and political efficacy on political mobilization. The study adopted the structural equation modeling technique to analyse questionnaires collected from 311 college voters and discovered that instead of demobilizing turnout, self-reported exposure to political advertisements boosts young voters' sense of political efficacy and stimulates their political participation by raising the degree to which they perceive that campaign advertisements affect other voters. Supportively, in studying the influence of online and offline news on political participation, Moeller, Vreese, Esser, and Kunz, (2014) concluded that media use is a pathway to political participation through internal political efficacy. A growing body of research seems to agree that political adverts have a positive relationship with electorates' participation in politics (Olujide et. al, 2011; Lin, 2014; Moeller et. al, 2014; Ojeka and Ajekaiye, 2018). However, this is not the case with other researchers like Durante and Guiterrez (2014), who found that political Ads tend to have no significant impact on voters' political efficacy (knowledge of candidates' political message), by extension, political participation. In addition, ads tend to be more effective at convincing individuals that are more educated, and those who voted for the party in the past. This negativity effect of political ads on voters' behavior was supported by Ojekwe (2016).

Durante and Gutierrez (2014) carried out a study in the effect of political ads on voting intentions. The study revealed that political ads on both radio and TV have a positive and significant effect on voting intentions. Other researchers who have similar findings include Owuamalam (2002); Ojeka an ajakaiye (2015). However, this effect is short-lived (about two weeks), and is stronger in the early weeks of the campaign. Taking it a bit further, (Hill, 2017) revealed that voter turnout is influenced by the length of the campaign and the amount of money spent on it. According to the research of Ezegwu, Etukudo, and Akpan (2015), which sought to determine the extent to which the electorate in Aguata L.G.A was exposed to political advertising, as well as the extent to which they were influenced by political advertising messages in their choice of candidates during the elections, revealed that to a large extent, the electorate in Aguata L.G.A was exposed to political advertising; radio was the main channel through which they were exposed. The findings further showed that the electorates were somewhat influenced by the political advertising messages they were exposed to. The study concluded that political advertising remains a veritable tool to securing victory in Nigerian elections. In the study of Alsamydai and Yousif (2018), which focused on the effect of political advertisement on voters' selection of a candidate, findings showed that advertisement campaigns through Television came in the first degree in impact on electing electoral candidate choice. An entirely opposing result is observed in Ashworth and Clinton (2006), which concluded that political campaigns do not affect the turnout decisions of voters.

Likewise, arguments regarding the effect of political adverts on political efficacy has heralded recent literature. In the study of the effects of Political Advertising among young voters in the 2008 Presidential

Campaign in America, Kaid, Fernandez, and Painter (2011) revealed that viewing political ads significantly increased levels of political information efficacy, making young citizens more confident that they possessed the information and knowledge necessary to participate in the political system. This supported the findings of Kaid, Postelnicu, Landreville, Yun and LeGrange (2007) which emphasized that voters learn more about the message and image of contestants through political ads. The ripple effect of political efficacy on political participation according to Amna, Munck and Zetterberg (2004) was therefore found to be positive, because according to their research, if people are politically aware, they tend to get engaged.

Heated debate about relationship between political cynicism and political apathy has enveloped existing literature. While some researchers agree that a positive relationship exists between these variables, others vehemently posit otherwise. For instance, according to Pinkleton, Austin, Zhou, Willoughby, and Reiser, (2012), Cynicism has no relationship with apathy. On the contrary, Yamamamoto, Kushin, and Dalisay (2016) observed a positive relationship between the two constructs, however he further stated that the positive relationship between cynicism and apathy was weaker for respondents who paid greater attention to social media for political information. Also, the indirect relationship between cynicism and apathy through external political efficacy was weaker for those who paid greater attention to social media for political information.

Yamamoto and Kushin (2014) studied the effects of social media attention, online expression, and traditional Internet sources on political cynicism and apathy. Based on the data collected from an online survey of college students, the findings reveal that attention to social media for campaign information is positively related to cynicism and apathy. Contrarily, Pap, Bilandic, and Ham, (2018) discovered a negative relationship between political awareness and political apathy.

Assessing the relationship between political cynicism and political involvement, Fu, Mou, Miller, and Jalette (2007) found a positive relationship between the two. This was based on the predication that cynical citizens can be politically involved in some context. Other researchers, like Opdycke, Segura, and Vasquez (2013), have also critically examined the effects of political cynicism, political information efficacy and media consumption on intended voter participation. First, one of the findings of Opdycke et. al, (2013) is that political information efficacy and political cynicism do not influence the likelihood to vote, in fact, political cynicism drives voters away from the voting booth. This is a contradictory finding to previous studies (Amna, Munck, and Zetterberg, 2004; Fu et. al, 2007) that indicate that cynicism and efficacy are positively significant to voter turnout. Secondly their findings reveal that the leading source from which most participants obtained their political information from was social media sites followed by online newspapers and news sites.

Literature about the influence of presumed influence is very limited, most especially in relation to voting intentions. However, some researchers have applied the presumed influence hypotheses to other areas, such as smoking habits (Gunther, Bolt, Borzekowski, Liebhart, and Dillard, 2006), and politicians' media power (Cohen, Tsfati, and Sheafer, 2008). According to Gunther et. al, (2006) research on 'Presumed Influence on Peer Norms: How Mass Media Indirectly Affect Adolescent Smoking', data collected from a sample of 818 middle school students revealed that both pro- and antismoking messages indirectly influenced smoking susceptibility through their perceived effect on peers. However, this indirect effect is significantly stronger for pro-smoking messages than for antismoking messages, an outcome that most likely increases adolescents' susceptibility to cigarettes. Gunther et. al (2006) further explained that with greater exposure to media messages, individuals assume these messages reach a wider audience of others, developing a subjective sense that more of their friends, acquaintances, and peers in general are exposed to and influenced by this media content. Thus, perceptions of peer exposure should mediate the relationship between personal exposure to media content and perceived peer norms. Digressing a little bit from the context of Gunther's work, Cohen et. al (2008) study on politicians' perception of media power based on the influence of presumed influence, shoed a positive relationship.

METHOD OF DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSES

We adopt descriptive statistics in the form of averages to analyse the collected data, while the stated hypotheses in will be tested using multiple regression. The researcher adopts multiple regression for the reason to examine the perception of the effect of the political advertising media on voters' participation.

This section focuses on data presentation, analysis and test of hypotheses. Data presentation was done using tables, percentages and frequencies. The presentation and analysis of data were based on the responses obtained from the administered questionnaire distributed to voters in Anambra State, Nigeria.

We use Tables for the demographic variables as well as other responses to the questionnaire items, followed by a brief analysis of the results, while the structural equation model in AMOS model was used in testing the hypotheses. The researcher distributed a total of 400 copies of questionnaires which covered the entire sample size of voters. However, only 393 copies of the retrieved questionnaire were valid for this study. Thus, this study presents and analyses only valid questionnaires.

RESULTS

This study examines the interrelationship between political campaign advertisement and voter participation. Voter's social media exposure, mass media, political rallies, town crier, will be measured as dimensions of political campaign advertisement. Similarly, voters' apathy, cynicism, efficacy will be measured as voters' participation.

The output of the analysis reveals that the exposure to town criers influenced voters' participation during election in Anambra State. The result will show that Town crier had a significant positive influence on voters' participation during presidential election in Anambra State. This result is in tandem with that of Ojekwe (2016) who carried out a study on Traditional Advert Campaigns and Voting Behaviour: A Study of Akinwunmi Ambode's Election and Campaign in Lagos State, specifically examining traditional advert campaigns of the All Progressive Congress (APC) gubernatorial candidate in Lagos state. The study result showed that town criers influenced voters' participation during the 2015 governorship election in Lagos State.

Also, political rallies are found to affect voters' participation during elections in Anambra State. The result reveals that political rallies have a significant positive effect on voters' participation during presidential election in Anambra State. This result conforms to that of Olujide, Adeyemi and Gbadeyan (2011) who carried out a study titled 'Nigerian Electorates' Perception of Physical contacts as Election Campaign tools'. Findings from the study indicate that political rallies in form of physical contacts have significant positive effect on the electorate and their voting behaviour.

The study also sought the influence of social media (Facebook) on voters' participation during election in Anambra State. The result indicates that Facebook had a significant positive influence on voters' participation during election in Anambra State. This result agrees with the findings of Arulchelvan (2014) in his study titled: Social Media Communication Strategies for Election Campaigns: Experiences of IndianPolitical Parties, which revealed that utilization of social media such as Facebook gave a new facet that was highly beneficial to the Indian politics because a large number of voters were reached and also influenced voters' participation in the general election in India. This finding is also consistent with Cohen et al. (2008) which assert that political behaviour is a social behaviour influenced not only by the concerned citizens' thought but also on the thoughts of others usually expressed via the social media platforms.

Similarly, our findings indicate that mass media (billboards) have a significant effect on voters' participation during election in Anambra State. This result aligns with the findings of Ezegwu, Ezeji and Agbasimelo

(2015) who examined the influence of Goodluck Jonathan and Muhammadu Buhari's billboard campaigns on voters' behaviour in Anambra state. The findings indicate among other things, that voters in Anambra state will be significantly influenced by their exposure to these billboards to participate in the 2015 general election, and most of them will recall the message contents of Jonathan more than that of Buhari. In all, the campaign advertisements can be considered a tool to use for encouraging voters' participation in the political process; this will give rise to political efficacy, voter apathy and/or voter cynicism.

Data presentation was done using tables, percentages and frequencies. The presentation and analysis of data were based on the responses obtained from the administered questionnaire distributed to voters in Anambra State, Nigeria.

Table 4. 1 Please indicate the number of times you have voted in the past.'

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	'First time'	104	26.5	26.5
	'Second time'	154	39.2	65.6
	'Third time'	55	14	79.6
	'Four times'	50	12.7	92.4
	'Above Four times'	30	7.6	100
	Total	**393**	**100**	

Field Survey, 2019

Table 4.1 shows the respondents level of participation in elections in the past. The first-time voter accounted for 26.5%; 39.2% of the respondents indicated they had voted twice, 14% thrice, 12.7% have voted four times, and 7.6% have voted more than four times in the past. The table indicates that 73.5% of the respondents have voted at least twice in the past, implying that they are well aware of the political process, hence, knowledgeable enough to provide relevant responses to the study.

Table 4.2

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	'Daily'	148	37.7	37.7
	'6-4 times a week.'	75	19.1	56.7
	'3-2 times a week'	118	30	86.8
	'Once a week'	34	8.7	95.4
	'Never'	18	4.6	100
	Total	**393**	**100**	

Field Survey, 2019

Shown in table 4.2 is the extent to which respondents are exposed to political campaign adverts. 37.7% indicates that they are exposed to the ads on a daily basis, 19.1% about 6-4 times in a week, 30% are exposed to campaigns 3 to 2 times in a week, 8.7% once a week and 4.6% indicates that they were never

exposed to political campaign adverts. pp-=][-000000p[jiu

Table 4.3

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	'strongly disagree'	11	2.8	2.8
	'disagree'	38	9.7	12.5
	'neutral'	79	20.1	32.6
	Agree	139	35.4	67.9
	'strongly agree'	126	32.1	100
	Total	**393**	**100**	

Field Survey, 2019

The study sought the opinion of the respondents about the political process. The results as shown in table 4.3 indicates that 32.1% strongly agrees that political adverts do not discuss serious matters concerning the people, 35.4% agreed to the statement, 20.1% were not decided, 9.7% disagreed to the statement while 2.8% strongly disagreed.

Table 4.4 'Candidates for office are interested only in peoples votes not their opinion'

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	'strongly disagree'	9	2.3	2.3
	'disagree'	35	8.9	11.2
	'neutral'	96	24.4	35.6
	Agree	155	39.4	75.1
	'strongly agree'	98	24.9	100
	Total	**393**	**100**	

Field Survey, 2019

Table 4.3.4 presents the voters' view of candidates for elective position. 24.9% of the voters strongly agreed that candidates for political office are not interested in people's opinion, only in their votes. 39.4% of the respondents agreed to the statement, 24.4% were indifferent, 8.9% disagreed to the statement while 2.3% strongly disagreed.

Table 4. 5   'Politicians are more interested in winning not voters interest'

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	'strongly disagree'	9	2.3	2.3
	'disagree'	48	12.2	14.5
	'neutral'	109	27.7	42.2
	Agree	144	36.6	78.9
	'strongly agree'	83	21.1	100
	Total	**393**	**100**	

Field Survey, 2019

Table 4.3.5 shows the perception of voters about the politicians. 21.1% of the voters strongly agree that

politicians are more interested in winning than voters' interest. 36.6% agree to the statement, 27.7% were indifferent, 12.2% disagreed to the statement while 2.3% strongly disagreed to the statement.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This study sets out to examine the interrelationship between political campaign advertisement and voter participation. Voter's social media exposure, mass media, political rallies, town crier, was measured as dimensions of political campaign advertisement. Similarly, voters' apathy, cynicism, efficacy were measured as voters' participation.

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Similarly, our findings indicate that mass media (billboards) has a significant effect on voters' participation during election in Anambra State. This result aligns with the findings of Ezegwu, Ezeji and Agbasimelo (2015) who examined the influence of Good luck Jonathan and Muhammadu Buhari's billboard campaigns on voters' behaviour in Anambra state. The findings indicated among other things, that voters in Anambra state were significantly influenced by their exposure to these billboards to participate in the 2015 general election, and most of them recalled the message contents of Jonathan more than that of Buhari.

In all, the campaign advertisements can be considered a tool used for encouraging voters' participation in the political process; this will give rise to political efficacy, voter apathy and/or voter cynicism.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The following are the findings of this study

1. Social media has a significant influence on voter apathy to presidential elections in Nigeria (β = 0.550; $p<0.05$).

2. Social media has a significant influence on voter cynicism to presidential elections in Nigeria (β = 0.330; $p<0.05$).

3. Social media has a significant influence on political efficacy of presidential elections in Nigeria (β = 0.220; $p<0.05$).

4. Exposure to town crier has a significant influence on voter apathy to presidential elections in Nigeria (β = 0.276; $p<0.05$).

5. Exposure to town crier has a significant influence on voter cynicism to presidential elections inNigeria (β = 0.357; $p<0.05$).

6. Exposure to town crier has a significant influence on political efficacy of presidential elections inNigeria (β = 0.109; $p<0.05$).

7. Political rallies have a significant influence on voter apathy to presidential elections in Nigeria (β =0.319; $p<0.05$).

8. Political rallies have a significant influence voter cynicism to presidential elections in Nigeria (β = 0.106; $p<0.05$).

9. Political rallies have a significant influence political efficacy of presidential elections in Nigeria (β =0.611; $p<0.05$).

10. Mass media have significant influence voter apathy to presidential elections in Nigeria (β = 0.312; $p <0.05$).

11. Mass media have significant influence voter cynicism to presidential elections in Nigeria (β = 0.163; $p <0.05$).

12. Mass media have significant influence political efficacy of presidential elections in Nigeria (β = 0.296; $p<0.05$).

CONCLUSION

The results of this study lead to the following conclusions; there is a complicated relationship between political advertising and voter participation in terms of the ways they are applied. Voters' exposure to political advertising via social media, mass media, political rallies and town criers has a significant influence on their perception and participation during elections. This study also revealed that apathy, cynicism and political efficacy are dimensions of voter perception as a result of political advertising. Thus, the effort of the electoral umpire should be to influence voters' perception of political efficacy to increase voter turnout and participation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are made from the study findings:

1. The use of town criers as political advertisement tools should be encouraged especially at the grass-root by politicians who may not have what it takes to adopt and use the other mass media.

2. Political rallies as powerful political advertising tool that helps the candidates to have physical contacts with the electorates should be used often in mobilising electorates to participate in the electoral process.

3. Facebook platform should be used more as it helps to engage voters especially the younger generation, to share their views about a candidate, political parties' manifestoes.

4. Billboard usage should also be explored as the electorates/voters are inspired to see their political candidates on bill boards and posters; more so, it gives them a sense of belonging and increases the popularity of the candidate or party. This is particularly with the politically less informed and unlearned electorate.

5. The electoral umpire should strive to ensure the free, fair and credible elections are held at all times as this implies that the political process and institution is effective. Thus, increasing voter participation and intention to get involved in the political process.

6. Politicians should, through their campaign advertisements, discuss and show readiness to work in the interest of the masses; this will reduce the level of apathy brewing amongst most voters.

7. Political advertising should be aired through various media, particularly those that suit the voters' media preference so that political information is received without too much effort.

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