

## **POLITICAL RADIO ADVERTISEMENT AND VOTERS' CHOICE OF CANDIDATE DURING ELECTIONS IN NIGERIA**

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**ABSTRACT:** This study investigates the influence of political radio advertisements on civil servants' voting choices during the 2022 Osun State gubernatorial election, exploring the effectiveness of this campaign amidst low voter turnout. The study employed a survey research design through the use of a questionnaire, which was used to gather data among civil servants in the Ede North Local Government, with a sample size of 173 respondents. The findings indicate that while respondents frequently engage with radio content, their assessment of the educational and persuasive quality of political ads is moderate. Notably, ads were seen as critical of opponents, yet their influence on voters' choices was ambiguous, with many respondents indicating a limited impact on their electoral decisions. This aligns with previous studies emphasizing the dual role of media in both informing and influencing voter behaviour. The research highlights the complexities of political advertising in shaping electoral outcomes and offers recommendations for more effective communication strategies tailored to the electorate's needs in Nigeria's evolving political landscape.

**Keywords:** Political Advertising, Voter Behaviour, Radio Influence, Electoral Choice, Nigeria Elections

### **INTRODUCTION**

Political communication relies heavily on mass media, including radio, television, newspapers, and magazines, to relay messages from political parties and candidates to diverse audiences (Wolfsfeld, 2022). Among these, radio stands out as an affordable and accessible medium, particularly in communities with varied socioeconomic backgrounds.

Communication, which is essential to human interaction, has evolved from manual methods to advanced digital systems. Technology now plays a pivotal role in enhancing communication between individuals and organizations, offering more efficient and effective ways to exchange ideas and information (Tidd & Bessant, 2022). As such, it has transformed the nature of both personal and political discourse, creating new avenues for engagement and interaction.

The Nigerian Civil Service, comprising nonmilitary and nonpolice government employees, plays a significant role in the country's governance. Civil servants in Nigeria progress on the basis of their qualifications and seniority, with recent reforms aimed at improving efficiency. Historically, civil servants have been seen as upholders of the public good, distinct from private-sector employees, and have been held to high standards of integrity, as their work serves the common interest.

In political advertising, parties and candidates use media to shape voters' perceptions, offering clear information on their policies and vision. Political advertisements, especially through radio, help bridge the gap between candidates and voters, ensuring that electorates are well informed when making their choices. This study focuses on the influence of radio political

advertisements on civil servants in Ede North during the 2022 Osun State gubernatorial election, examining how this influenced voting behaviour.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Over the years, Nigeria's elections have usually witnessed low turnouts of voters regardless of the several appeals made through various adverts on radio (Wolfsfeld, 2022). Interestingly, despite the dwindling turnouts of electorates, political parties still spend large amounts of money on radio adverts (Jaquet et al., 2022). Others were loaded with exaggerated promises, hate and negative messages about their opponents targeted at gaining the sympathy of the electorates.

Despite the widespread use of radio advertisements during elections, their impact on voter behaviour in Nigeria remains unclear. While radio campaigns are known to shape political awareness, the extent to which they influence electoral decisions, especially in localized elections, is underexplored (Doherty et al., 2022). The 2022 Osun gubernatorial election, characterized by significant campaign activity and low voter turnout, presents an opportunity to investigate the gap between media exposure and voting behaviour (Ikefuama, 2023). However, this research is needed to assess how radio ads resonate with different voter groups and whether political messaging addresses voter needs effectively, ensuring increased participation and informed choices

### **Objectives of the Study**

The general objective of this study is to determine the influence of radio advertisements and voters' choices of candidates during the 2022 Osun State governorship election. The specifics are:

1. Determine the extent to which political radio advertisements create awareness for the 2022 Osun State governorship election among civil servants;
2. Investigate the extent to which political advertisements in radio enhanced the understanding of the electorate of the issues canvassed by the candidates before the Osun State governorship election among civil servants;
3. examine the extent to which exposure to radio advertisements influences electorate choice among civil servants.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Advertising**

Advertising has evolved into a fundamental aspect of modern society, impacting businesses and individuals alike. Historically, advertising began with rudimentary methods, such as town criers promoting goods such as slaves and cattle (Gartlehner, 2021). A written advertisement, over 3000 years old, further demonstrates its ancient roots, offering a reward for the return of a runaway slave. The Industrial Revolution significantly boosted the advertising industry, intertwining it with mass communication and expanding its reach across various human activities (Radošinská, 2020). Advertising today encompasses both marketing and behavioural sciences, making it difficult to define precisely owing to its multidisciplinary nature.

Political advertising in Nigeria began earnest during the 1980s, notably with the Nigerian Advanced Party (NAP) led by Tunji Braithwaite (Ogunnoiki, 2018). With the help of insight communication, the NAP made significant strides in political marketing, although it faced stiff competition from more established parties such as the Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN). Before this, political campaigning in Nigeria was limited to rallies and speeches. However, during the transition to civilian rule in the 1990s, political advertising gained unprecedented prominence as the two major political parties, the National Republican Convention (NRC) and Social Democratic Party (SDP), which relied heavily on media to engage an increasingly disillusioned electorate (Okanlawon & Adebayo, 2020).

In recent Nigerian elections, particularly the 2015 and 2019 presidential elections, political advertising has reached new levels of intensity. Candidates such as Goodluck Jonathan and Muhammadu Buhari dominated the advertising space, overshadowing the other 14 candidates in the race (Ugochukwu, 2021). These campaigns were marked by fierce competition, hate speech, and death threats, reflecting the bitter rivalry between the leading contenders. The prominence of political advertising raises questions about its influence on voters' decisions, especially in a context where personal connections, tribal affiliations, and regional loyalties often play a significant role.

Political advertising is a paid form of political communication that seeks to inform, mobilize, and persuade voters in favour of a particular candidate or party. It has become a powerful tool in shaping voting behaviour and perceptions, especially in an era where party loyalty is waning. Through advertising, candidates can communicate directly with voters, presenting their image and policies in the best light. The effectiveness of political advertising lies in its ability to influence attitudes, making it a key strategy for candidates seeking electoral success.

Over the past two decades, political advertising in Nigeria has increased significantly owing to advancements in information and communication technology (Adegbola 2019). Political campaigns are now treated as marketing endeavours, with parties employing advertising and public relations agencies to package their candidates. This practice became particularly prominent during the Third Republic, with presidential aspirants such as Chief M.K.O. Abiola of the SDP and Alhaji Bashir Tofa of the NRC making extensive use of advertising in their campaigns (Aseman, 2012). Political parties use advertising to educate the electorate about governance and present their manifestos through various media channels.

Political communication involves conveying ideas about the political process between candidates and voters. Effective communication allows voters to make informed decisions by evaluating candidates' policies and qualifications. Political parties advertise their manifestos and candidates' credentials through television and radio jingles aimed at persuading voters. These advertisements serve as a way for candidates to sell themselves to the electorate, using memorable slogans and songs to reinforce their messages.

While political advertising is a crucial factor, it is not the only factor influencing voters' decisions. Ethnic and religious affiliations, party loyalty, and personal connections also play significant roles in how Nigerian's vote. In the 2015 presidential election, for example, regional affiliations were particularly evident, with the All-Progressives Congress (APC) candidate Muhammadu Buhari receiving significant support from northern Nigeria. The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) faced accusations of registering ineligible voters, adding to the controversy surrounding the election.

Party loyalty remains a key factor in Nigerian politics, influencing many aspects of an individual's decision-making process (Eke, 2024). While some voters may shift allegiance due to short-term factors, such as the candidates' personalities or campaign promises, strong partisan ties often remain intact. Political parties use advertising to reinforce these loyalties while also attempting to sway undecided or neutral voters by highlighting their candidates' strengths and achievements.

The image of the candidate is another critical factor in elections, often influencing voters' decisions more than party affiliation. Candidates who are perceived as trustworthy, experienced, and charismatic tend to fare better in elections (Nai, and Martínez). Advertising plays a significant role in shaping these perceptions, as public relations campaigns are designed to project candidates in the most favourable light. However, negative personal attributes, such as dishonesty or a lack of integrity, can also negatively affect a candidate's chances of success (Melchers, 2020).

The Electoral Act of 2010 provides the legal framework for conducting elections in Nigeria, including guidelines for political advertising (Olarinmoye, 2017). According to the Act, political parties are allowed to campaign in public for a period of 90 days before election day, with campaigning ending 24 hours before the polls. These regulations aim to ensure fairness in the electoral process by preventing last-minute campaigns that could unfairly influence voters.

Political advertising, while influential, is just one of many factors affecting electoral decisions. Other variables, such as ethnic and religious affiliations, play significant roles in shaping voters' preferences. Nigeria's diverse population makes it challenging to unite the electorate under a single candidate or party, as each group tends to support its own. This reality underscores the importance of ethnic loyalty in Nigerian politics, where candidates often consolidate their power within their ethnic or regional base.

In conclusion, political advertising has become a vital part of Nigeria's electoral process, shaping voters' perceptions and decisions. However, it is not the only factor influencing voting behaviour, as personal connections, ethnic affiliations, and party loyalty continue to play significant roles. Understanding the interplay between these factors and the impact of political advertising is crucial for analysing electoral outcomes in Nigeria.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Research Design**

This study adopted the survey research method. This design is cost-effective and allows studies to be conducted within a reasonable time frame. Daramola (2011) stated that a descriptive survey research design is considered appropriate when a study focuses on people who are in a large population. The data were collected via a questionnaire; this design is relevant because the focus of this study is to understand the patterns of the variables of interest.

### **Population**

The Civil servants in the Ede North Local Government, Osun State, constituted the population for this study. According to (Ellio,2016), the former chairperson of the Ede North Local Government provided statistics for 307 people. Ede North Local

Government was strategically selected for this study due to its political relevance and demographic composition. The area plays a significant role in Osun State elections, with a mix of urban and semi-urban voters, including many civil servants who are likely to engage with political media. Additionally, Ede North's voter turnout trends offer an ideal context for exploring the effectiveness of political radio advertisements. Studying this area allows for an in-depth analysis of how targeted political campaigns resonate with voters in similar socio-political environments

### **Sampling Technique**

One local government in Osun State is randomly selected from the 30 local governments in Osun State. The multistage sampling technique is adopted for this study because the selection of the sample population is in stages and involves more than one sampling technique. First, a local government was randomly selected through balloting in Osun State; this was carried out to provide an equal chance of representation for all the local governments in Osun State to be part of the study. The local government area that was randomly selected was the Ede North Local Government through the use of a simple random sampling technique (balloting).

### **Sample size**

To calculate the sample size for this study, the Taro Yamane model (2003) was adopted. This process is important because it helps to determine a representative subset of the population that is needed to be able to be generalized to the total population. The total population of civil servants in the Ede North Local Government, Osun State, was given by the former chairperson Aderemi Eliot as 307

### **Research instrument**

One set of questionnaires is designed for this study and is administered directly to the respondents in the areas surveyed for this study purposively targeted at those who are civil servants. Close-ended types of questions are used. The questionnaire consists of 16 items and is divided into two sections: 'A' comprises four (4) items that are used to elicit demographic information from the subjects, whereas the other section of the questionnaire contains twelve (12) items that are used to elicit information on electorate perceptions towards radio adverts among civil servants.

### **Method of Data Gathering**

A total of 173 questionnaires was given to those who are civil servants in Ede North LGA by the researcher and collected back from them when completed.

### **Method of Data Analysis**

The data generated were collated and analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics such as frequency count, percentages mean, and standard deviation scores was used to answer the research questions 1-4

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The demographic table below shows that there are more male respondents (105 (61.4%) than female respondents (66 (38.6%), 35 representing 20.5% of the respondents are between the ages of 18–25 years, 59 (34.5%) are between the ages of 28–38 years, 56 (32.7%), are between the ages of 38–48 years, and 21 representing 12.3% are 48 years and above. Twenty-six (15.2%) of the respondents were single, 139 (81.3%) were married, 2 (1.2%) were divorced, and 4 (2.3%) were widowed. Two (1.2%) of the respondents were SSCE holders, 8 (4.7%) were OND holders, 16 (9.4%) were NCE holders, and 74 (43.3%) were HND/B.Sc. holders, 54 (31.6%) are MSC/M.Phil. holders, while 17 (9.9%) of the respondents were PHD holders.

Demographic Distribution		F	%
Gender	Male	105	61.4%
	Female	66	38.6%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>171</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
Age	18-28yrs	35	20.5%
	28-38yrs	59	34.5%
	38-48yrs	56	32.7%
	48 and above	21	12.3%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>171</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
Marital status	Single	26	15.2%
	Married	139	81.3%
	Divorced	2	1.2%
	Widowed	4	2.3%
	Separated	0	0.0%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>171</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
Educational background	Primary school certificate	0	0.0%
	SSCE	2	1.2%
	OND	8	4.7%
	NCE	16	9.4%
	HND/B.Sc.	74	43.3%
	MSC/M.Phil.	54	31.6%
	PHD	17	9.9%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>171</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2023

**Table 2: Extent to which political radio advertisements create awareness for the 2022 Osun State governorship election among civil servants**

Items	Always		Often		Sometimes		Rarely		Never		MEAN	STD DEV
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%		
How often do you listen to radio?	44	25.7%	59	34.5%	46	26.9%	20	11.7%	2	1.2%	3.71	1.013

How often did you listen to governorship advertisements on radio during the 2022 Osun state election?	25	14.6%	48	28.1%	55	32.2%	29	17.0%	14	8.2%	3.23	1.145
How often did you watch political advertisement during the 2019 presidential election?	9	5.3%	11	6.4%	43	25.1%	57	33.3%	51	29.8%	2.23	1.109
Did you often perceive radio political advertisement educating, enlightening, informative, persuasive and affirming	42	24.6%	42	24.6%	47	27.5%	20	11.7%	20	11.7%	3.38	1.293

Source Field Survey, 2023

### Discussion of Findings

Table 2 shows the extent to which political radio advertisements create awareness for the 2022 Osun State governorship election among civil servants. The results reveal that respondents listen to radio and that they sometimes perceive radio political advertisements as educating, enlightening, informative, and persuasive and affirm that they sometimes listen to governorship advertisements on radio during the 2022 Osun state election, while they often watch political advertisements during the 2019 presidential election.

These findings support those of Ezekiel (2013), who stated that television and radio are media of advertising during elections in Anambra state. Their findings revealed that political advertising is one of the many ways in which politicians and political parties mobilize the electorate. Television programmes, newspapers, radio, billboards and many other media are used in carrying out political advertisements. There was a great increase in and style of political advertising, which could be witnessed in the 2011 state and general elections. Television was primarily used in out-witting one another in the election. They aim to determine that if advertising truly influences the electorates to vote for the candidate being advertised, parties that win elections are usually because they advertise more than the other political parties do; however, they are more particular in evaluating the influence that political advertising has on electorates in Anambra state, Nigeria. The study used a survey research method and revealed that exposure to television advertisements stimulates quicker recall in people and is a form of political advertising.

**Table 3: Extent to which political advertisements in radio enhanced the understanding of the electorate of the issues canvassed by the candidates before the Osun State governorship election among civil servants**

Items	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		MEAN	STD DEV
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%		
Political advertisement helps to shape my perception of the gubernatorial candidates	72	42.1%	52	30.4%	33	19.3%	14	8.2%	3.06	.971
Political advertisement messages influence my attitude towards political candidates	27	15.8%	58	33.9%	60	35.1%	26	15.2%	2.50	.935
The advertisement offers me reliable information about the candidates	48	28.1%	65	38.0%	44	25.7%	14	8.2%	2.85	.922
Radio advertisement influence me more than other form of political advertisements	58	33.9%	76	44.4%	29	17.0%	8	4.7%	3.07	.833
The fear of losing election, setting old scores and attracting supporters for voting are the reasons for political adverts during elections	80	46.8%	53	31.0%	26	15.2%	12	7.0%	3.17	.935
Would you rate the 2022 Osun State governorship election adverts you listened to on radio critical of opponent and attacking of opponent	87	50.9%	59	34.5%	19	11.1%	6	3.5%	3.32	.810
Political advertisement influences my choice of gubernatorial candidate to a great extent	70	40.9%	59	34.5%	33	19.3%	9	5.3%	3.11	.897
Can you describe the radio political advertisement disseminated during the 2022 Osun State governorship election believable effective	42	24.6%	68	39.8%	49	28.7%	12	7.0%	2.81	.885



Political Advertisement influence my choice of gubernatorial candidate to no extent	75	43.9%	68	39.8%	22	12.9%	6	3.5%	3.23	.808
My feeling towards political advertisement I listen to on radio was positive	56	32.7%	61	35.7%	42	24.6%	12	7.0%	2.94	.924
The political radio advertisement disseminated during the 2022 governorship election are of believable effective	58	33.9%	69	40.4%	36	21.1%	8	4.7%	3.03	.860
The advertisements offered me reliable information about the candidate	69	40.4%	59	34.5%	33	19.3%	10	5.8%	3.09	.909

Source Field Survey, 2023

### Discussion of Findings

The findings from Table 3 below show the extent to which political advertisements in radio enhanced the understanding of the electorate of the issues canvassed by the candidates before the Osun State governorship election among civil servants. The results of the findings show that the extent to which political advertisements at the radio level enhance the understanding of the electorate of the issues can be captured by the candidates before the Osun state governorship election among civil servants, as Osun 2022 governorship election among civil servants listed on the radio site, is critical to the enemy and attacking of the opponent. Political advertisements influence the choices of gubernatorial candidates to no extent, the fear of losing election, setting old scores and attracting supporters for voting are the reasons for political adverts during elections, and political advertisements influence civil servants' choice of gubernatorial candidates to a great extent.

The study complements that of (Abigail, 2007), who conducted a study on the factors that enhance media output during elections in Nigeria using the April 2007 general elections as a case study and discovered that the media power in elections is visible and that the media could be used to gain and direct attention to political parties and their candidates. It was concluded that the major factors that influence output during elections are ownership and the financial and political ideology of media owners.

### Recommendation

Political advertisement should be extended to other social media outlets, such as television and social media, to educate voters.

### Suggestions for further studies

1. Influence of advertisements on the vote-buying behaviour of residents in Osun State, Nigeria

2. Perception of political advertisements on the political perception of the Osun state residents

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