
Advertising Billings in the 2015 Presidential Electioneering Campaigns in Nigeria

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Abstract

This study investigates advertising billing in the 2015 Presidential campaigns in Nigeria; the monies spent on advertising by political parties and their candidates in the preparation for the elections, the issues raised by such media/campaign, and the implications of advertising billings on the Nigerian economy. The document analysis and telephone interview were used to gather data on two major political parties: the ruling People's Democratic Party and the main opposition party, the All Progressive Congress. Findings indicate that the billings were highest spent in Nigeria's history, (N7.457,732,849.77billion or \$374,760,44.5million) yet, it did not translate to victory at the polls by the highest spender, the PDP, which was the ruling party. Thus, dependency on political advertising alone may not translate to victory as other mediating factors may also be of significance.

Key Words: *Political advertising, advertising billings and Presidential Campaign*

Introduction

The assimilation hypothesis derived from social judgment theory suggests that exposure to political advertising campaigns encourage people to "assimilate" or equate their feelings about related attitude targets, (Iyengar and Simon 2000). The essence of this concept according to them is that negative reactions to political advertising will colour attitudes towards other forms of advertisements. They further argued that the competing possibility termed the "contrast" hypothesis, suggests that the negative response to political campaigns actually makes commercial advertising appear more appealing than it would have been in the absence of political advertisements. The conclusion to this argument, therefore, is that commercial advertising is evaluated more favourably than political advertising. They attempt to distinguish political advertising from commercial advertising by identifying the following:

- Political advertisers frequently engaged in "comparative" advertising in which the opposing candidates program and performance are criticized and even ridiculed. There is no comparable data for any commercial advert campaign; the "comparative" element is unlikely to be so prominent.
- Political advertisers do not adhere to any codes or procedures intended to protect the public from the inaccurate and unsubstantiated claims but commercial advertisers voluntarily subscribe to a "code of advertising ethics."

Political advertisers seek vote at any cost, even including a degraded sense of public regard for the candidates and the electoral process. Discouraging people from voting seems to be more feasible in political advertisements than persuading supporters of one candidate to vote for the opponent. However, positivity is the currency of product advertisement.

The role of money in politics has traditionally been made the object of lively debates among political commentators and ordinary citizens alike. This is especially the case in countries, like the United States of America, where few limits exists on how much private

interests can contribute to political parties and how much the parties and their candidates can spend on campaigns (Prat, 2002) and Nigeria, where there is a law placing a limit to how much an individual or party could spend for campaigns. Indeed, over the past decades, the amount of resources spent for political campaigns has grown steadily both in mature and consolidating democracies. A large fraction of campaign money is spent on political advertising in the mass media, with television usually getting the lion's share.

Political campaigns are organized efforts which seek to influence the decision-making process within a specific group or environment, (Lynn 2009). It can also be viewed as the mobilization of forces either by an organization or individuals to influence others in order to effect an identified and desired political change. It shows people and particularly, political candidates' ability to sensitize the political community in relation to making the community see them as potentials and better representatives of the people. At any rate, every campaign is unique, and the ultimate goal of almost every political campaign is to win election. Although there is no single best campaign strategy but the right strategy may differ from one candidate to another for each election.

What seems to be very important in any political campaign is the message that is sent to the electorates. A campaign message is an important and potent tool that politicians use to express views and feelings to the public with the intention of reshaping and redirecting the electorates' opinions to align with theirs. The message should be a simple statement that can be repeated severally throughout the campaign period to persuade the target audience or influence voters' act in the candidates' favour. The campaign message ought to contain the salient ingredients that the candidate wishes to share with the voters and these must be repeated often in order to create a lasting impression on the voters. As a matter of fact, good campaigners prefer to keep the message broad to attract the voters. In other words, appropriate use of language calls for the proper identification of the kinds of electorates targeted for mobilization during or after a political campaign. Political campaign language is often characterized and shaped by rhetoric, persuasion, propaganda, jingles and slogans.

Rhetoric: The essence of rhetoric in politics is mainly to display an individual or his beliefs in the most favourable light. It is in view of this, that George Orwell argues that "political language is designed to make lies sound truthful and murder respectable" (Harris, 1979, p.58). Rhetoric is the art of speaking well to persuade people. It is a language which is full of unnecessarily long, formal or literary words, which is also often insincere and untrue. Simpson and Mayr (2010) points out that metaphor has long been recognized as an essential feature of political rhetoric and as an important means of conceptualizing political issues and constructing world views.

Persuasion: Is a process by which someone, usually by reasoned arguments or logic, appeal to sound judgment in order to attain his set goals. A persuasive language soothes the voters particularly, when topics or issues that revolve around problems that affect voters are repeatedly mentioned in the course of the campaign. It also follows that the language of political campaign embodied in propaganda and rhetoric, is persuasive because most politicians adopt these linguistic devices to cajole the electorates to vote for them and their political parties by presenting themselves as the only capable individuals for the position (Omozuwa and Ezejideaku, 2007). The point is that the phenomenon of persuasion is an integral part of politics and a necessary component of the pursuit and exercise of power. Politicians use a variety of techniques to ensure they captivate voter's attention and establish credibility and trust amongst the electorates.

Moreover, just as the need for information cannot be over emphasized, so also is the idea of persuasion with the intention of stimulating interest in a political party or aspirant is quite important. Effective persuasion can be stimulated through symbolic actions of speech in the form of jingles, catchy expressions, witty sayings, proverbial expressions, songs, facial expressions, posture, gesture and other means of demonstrating political intentions. However, the intention to merely entertain an audience should not arise in a political campaign. The reason for this is tied to the seriousness of ensuring that electorates are not just informed but persuaded about the party's agenda or at best the aspirant's willingness to carry out to the letter laudable objectives and programmes of the party. Thus, a campaign message that is clearly expressed in simple but straightforward, everyday language will automatically convince the electorates to vote in favour of a party.

Propaganda: Is the expression of opinions or actions carried out deliberately by individuals or groups with a view to influence the opinions or actions of other individuals or groups for predetermined ends through psychological manipulations. It is usually repeated and dispersed over a wide range of media in order to stimulate and sensitize the electorates and by extension, assist in harming an opponent.

Slogans: A campaign slogan, on the other hand, is a simple catchy phrase accompanying a logo or brand that encapsulates the aim and objective of the political candidate. It is a key phrase connected to a political party or candidate for a position. Slogans can also be conceived from the idea of a motto or an expression of the ideals or beliefs of the candidate's opponents. Importantly, political slogan is poised to connect voter's concerns and the current political environment in a succinct and precise form.

It is however interesting to note that during the 2015 Presidential elections in Nigeria, all these campaign strategies were used by politicians in differing extents and at different times.

The Political Advertising Argument

Advertising is the structured and composed non-personal communication of information, usually paid for and usually persuasive in nature about products, (goods, services and ideas) by identified sponsors through various media (Arens 2002). Good advertising says the right thing about the right product in the right way to the right people at the right time and in the right place. (Solaru 1994). Advertisements are paid for by the sponsors, which enables the individuals and/or groups to say what they want to say the way they would want their audience to receive the information (Albert, 2010). Thus, political advertising provides the candidates and their parties the avenue to persuade voters to vote for them. Political advertising is defined as the process whereby a candidate and/or party designs, books and pays for a form of non-personal communication that promotes his or her/ party attributes or policies over those of their opponents and that is designed to elicit specific behaviours, such as voting, and/or increased awareness of the candidate or party. Political advertising thus aims to ensure that the public is aware of an opponent's weaknesses whilst promoting the sponsoring candidate's strengths and policy differences (O'Cass, 2002; Meirick, 2002). Candidates can control the message sent to the target audience and its format, and can associate the sponsoring candidate with positive images and their opponent with negative images. As political products are usually associated with a personality, several researchers have suggested that the most effective means of highlighting differences between one political product and another is to use advertising that associates negative images with opposing candidates (Um and Austin, 2002; Meirick, 2002; Sorescu and Gelb, 2000).

Similarly, Robbs (2009) views political advertising as the use of media by political candidates to increase their exposure to the public. To him, the extensive use of television and radio has supplanted direct appearances on the campaign trail which was popularly used by politicians in the past five decades. Spot advertisement is the most commonly used technique and it attempts to create a favourable image of the candidate and a negative image of the opponent. It links the candidate with desirable groups in the community and communicates the candidate's stand on selected issues (Robbs, 2009).

Over time, political candidates' use of this advertising has evolved and led researchers to identify three types of advertising: attack advertising; comparative advertising, and negative advertising. Each type is different to the other, and can be adapted to any stage of a campaign (Pinkleton, 1997).

Attack political advertising involves an aggressive, one-sided assault designed to draw attention to an opponent's weaknesses in either character or issue positions. It is the most malicious form of negative advertising.

Comparative political advertising identifies a competing candidate and, by drawing comparisons, implies inferiority and degrades prospective voters' perceptions of the targeted candidate. Comparative messages may use opposing candidates' records, experiences, or issue positions either to communicate negative information about these or to imply the sponsoring candidate's superiority. However, there are two subsets of comparative political advertising that can be identified. They are direct comparative advertising and implied comparative advertising. Direct comparative advertising uses a two-sided message to identify the targeted candidate and contrast specific aspects of the candidates' records, experience or issue positions. The result is to position the sponsoring candidate as the obvious, superior choice. Implied comparative advertising is one-sided and does not mention the targeted candidate specifically. Instead, it leads the audience to make comparisons based on their knowledge of key campaign issues and interpretation of the advertising message (Pinkleton, 1997).

Negative political advertising assaults a targeted candidate's image or position. Negative advertisements can be defined as those that only present negative information about a competing candidate (Meirick, 2002). Negative advertisements can be broken down into subsets based on whether they dealt primarily with issues or images. Negative advertisements can also be divided into subsets based on political issue appeals and personal characteristic appeals.

Johnson-Cartee and Copeland (1989) believed that the term negative issue appeal is best used to describe advertising designed to make the negative appeal become a campaign issue. It can be argued that only comparative advertisements that focus on denigrating the opponent, as opposed to bolstering the sponsor, should be considered negative and that negative advertisements are a subset of comparative advertising. Other authors differ still on the contextual definition, considering overall tone as the most important defining characteristic (Lau and Pomper, 2001).

Interestingly, Goldstein and Freedman (2002) assert that there are three major categories of political advertising. These are political advertisements which give only statements about the candidate and no explicit mention of the candidate's opponent. Contrast advertisements contain both positive statement about the candidate and negative statement about the opponent. And, negative or attack advertisements contain only negative statements about the opponent and nothing positive about the candidate (Lau and Sigelman, 2000; Opeibi, 2006). But, Johnston and Kaid (2002) classified political advertising in to two groups of image and issue advertisements. Image advertisement is intended to humanize candidate for the voters; while, issue advertisement shows where a candidate stands in specific key issues.

The 2015 Presidential Campaign in Nigeria

Media analysts in Nigeria are of the opinion that the 2015 elections was the most expensive election in the history of the country. The analysts believed that the high campaign expenses in the 2015 elections in the country was due to the fierce rivalry between the then ruling party – the People’s Democratic Party (PDP), and their number one opposition (now the ruling party), the All Progressives Congress (APC). Former President of Outdoor Advertising Association of Nigeria (OAAN), Kola Ademolegun was of the belief that the 2015 presidential elections advertising budgets could run into billions of naira across the various media channels. He was quoted to have said “huge budgets have gone into this year’s elections. It has been fierce and for it to be this fierce, much money had gone into it both in above and below the line activities, (Obi 2015).

According to Open Society Justice Initiative (OSJI), (2005) campaign expenditure is conceptualized as expenditure incurred by/or on behalf of a registered political party or candidate to promote the party and candidate at an election or in connection with future elections, including expenditure that has the aim of damaging the prospects of another party or candidate. This definition takes into consideration spending from three sources – the candidate, the party, and spending on behalf of a political party or its candidate by a third party which could be their support groups, hidden advertisements by state and public institutions, or institutions supported by the State.

Also, the Political Party Financial Handbook (PPFH), a handbook developed by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) enumerates the following items as what constitutes political campaign expenses. They include: “political party broadcasts, advertisements, distribution of solicited and unsolicited materials to electorates, circulation of manifesto or other policy documents, market research and canvassing, media/publicity, transportation, rallies or other events” (INEC, p.7). It is worthy of note that political advertising is a component of this list of election expenses.

A study by Salman (2015) revealed that the People’s Democratic Party (PDP), its presidential candidate (Goodluck Jonathan), and pro-Goodluck Jonathan support groups spent a staggering consolidated spending outlay of over N3 billion, while the All Progressives Congress (APC), its presidential candidate (Muhammadu Buhari), and pro-GMB support groups spent well over N700 million between November 14, 2014 and March 28, 2015 to place advertisements of their parties and candidates on sixteen national newspapers. This is an estimated N3.8 billion just for newspaper advertisements excluding radio, television, and outdoor advertisements. One can only wonder, if the two parties spent this kind of amount on only newspaper advertising, how much did they spend on other mass media channels?

Audu (2015) asserts that media facts indicate that television advertising is poised to garner chunks of election advertising billings. He adds that the assertion is supported going by the cost of television advertising per slot, though it varies from region to region and according to visibility categorization. Audu (2015) aptly captures it thus;

Major television networks charge an average of N300,000 per slot of 60 and up to between 5-10 million for political events coverage depending on the duration. This does not take into account the surcharges for prime time and location. Some of these adverts run several times per day for about 30 days for the duration of the campaign. Radio commercials also occupy prime place, as radio jingles play a very important part in the sensitization, particularly, in reaching the remote parts of the country.

Ekwujuru (2015) buttresses this assertion when he stated that “advertising spending on

political campaigns for the March 28, 2015 presidential elections has been estimated to have cost political parties, friends and well-wishers of those seeking elective offices a princely N 4.9 billion”. He however added that Federal and State regulatory agencies have expressed displeasure over publications of unapproved advertising materials.

It is generally acknowledged, though, that conducting elections in any country is always a capital intensive endeavour. In the United States of America, for example, overall spending for the 2012 presidential campaign has been estimated to over \$2.6 billion. Similarly, in Mexico, campaign spending by the three main parties in the 2006 presidential campaign amounted to over \$300 million, accounting for an even larger share of GDP than in the United States (Larreguy, Marshall and Snyder, 2014).

Advertising Billings of Peoples Democratic Party and All Progressive Congress

This study made use of document analysis and telephone interview survey technique, to obtain data from advertising agencies, AAAN, OAPN, APCON, Phd Communications, PDP and APC Publicity Directors of Campaigns, as well as INEC sources. The two dominant parties in Nigeria were studied because out of 54 registered political parties in Nigeria by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), most of the parties didn’t have presidential candidates and a few that did, didn’t have the financial muscle to invest in political advertising. The parties that actually invested heavily in the industry were the ruling Peoples Democratic Party and the main opposition party, All Progressive Congress. Thus the billings discussed in this study are those of the PDP and the APC.

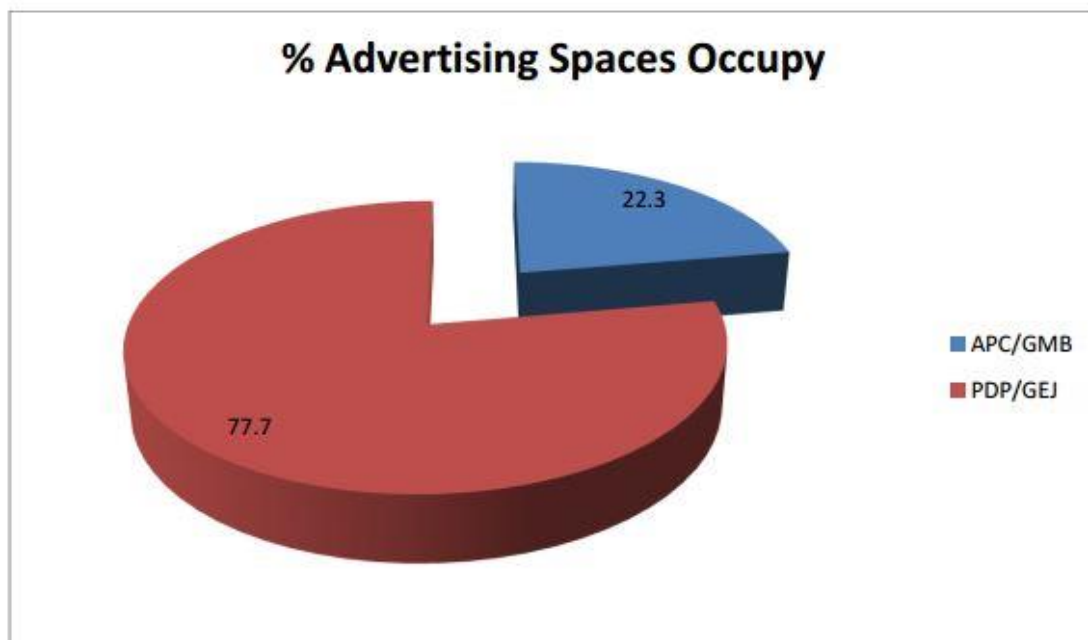


Chart 1: Percentage Advertising Spaces for the Two Candidates/Parties

Table1: **Total Campaign Advertising Spaces used in the Tracked Newspapers/Magazine promoting or defending the candidature of APC Candidate General Muhammadu Buhari (GMB)**

No.	Newspaper	APC	GMB	3 rd Party: (Pro- GMB)	Total
1	Blueprint	4			4
2	Business Day	2	1	1	4
3	Daily Independent			2	2
4	Daily Sun	22	3	56	81
5	Daily Trust	33	15	93	141
6	Guardian	18	4	48	70
7	Leadership	34	20	77	131
8	New Telegraph	1	2	3	6
9	Nigerian Pilot			1	1
10	Nigerian Tribune	8	6	25	39
11	Peoples Daily	1		1	2
12	Punch	24	5	72	101
13	Tell Magazine			1	1
14	The Nation	57	54	173	284
15	Thisday	17	5	83	105
16	Vanguard	29	11	48	89
Totals		250	126	685	1061

Source: Author (see: <http://csj-ng.org/publications/political-finance-reforms/federal-activities/>).

Chart 2: Composition of advertising spaces occupied by the different sponsor groups

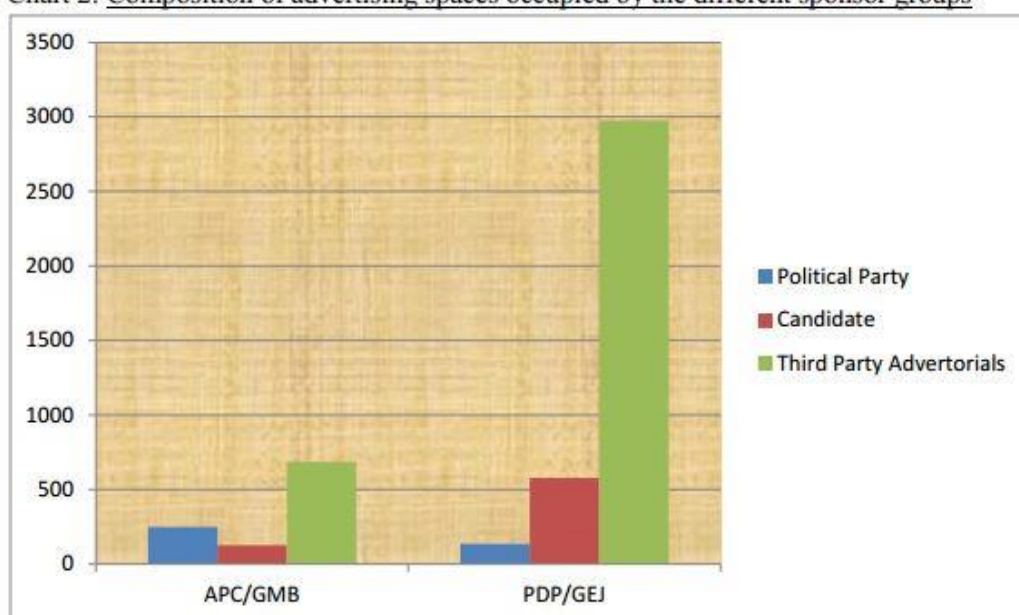


Table2: **Total Campaign Advertising Spaces used in the Tracked Newspapers/Magazine promoting or defending the candidature of PDP Candidate President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan (GEJ)**

No.	Newspaper	PDP	GEJ	3 rd Party: (Pro- GEJ)	Total
1	Blueprint		1		1
2	Business Day	2		55	57
3	Daily Independent				
4	Daily Sun	21	65	460	546
5	Daily Trust	15	44	275	334
6	Guardian	7	71	301	379
7	Leadership	7	34	195	236
8	New Telegraph	7	37	42	86
9	News Watch Times			8	8
10	Nigerian Pilot	1	18	105	124
11	Nigerian Tribune	6	72	242	320
12	Punch	24	57	241	322
13	Tell Magazine			11	11
14	The Nation	2	11	59	72
15	The News			1	1
16	Thisday	23	73	525	621
17	Vanguard	21	95	457	573
Totals		136	578	2977	3691

Source: Author (see: <http://csj-ng.org/publications/political-finance-reforms/federal-activities/>)

Conference-Paper-by-limoh-Salman-1

Table 3: Summary of cumulated Spending by APC/GMB/Pro-GMB support Groups for the entire campaign period (November 14, 2014 – March 28, 2015).

Newspaper	December	Jan/Feb	Feb/March	Total
Blueprint		2,982,032		2,982,032
Business Day		2,992,500		2,992,500
Daily Independent			1,155,524	1,155,524
Daily Sun	3,759,845	26,721,680	16,994,710	47,476,235
Daily Trust	12,519,179	38,450,417	40,495,956	91,465,552
Guardian	4,225,722	27,039,104	13,984,289	45,249,115
Leadership		48,194,802	78,845,313	127,040,115
New Telegraph			4,380,600	4,380,600
Nigerian Pilot			5,500,000	5,500,000
Nigerian Tribune	490,000	12,022,500	9,719,850	22,232,350
Peoples Daily		1,000,000		1,000,000
Punch	5,504,923	46,684,056	24,227,634	76,416,613
Tell Magazine		482,664		482,664
The Nation	16,202,389	78,924,255	75,645,740	170,772,384
Thisday	5,625,000	50,312,500	16,762,550	72,700,050
Vanguard	2,270,000	29,325,125	21,118,750	52,713,875
Totals	50,597,058	365,131,635	308,830,916	N724,559,609

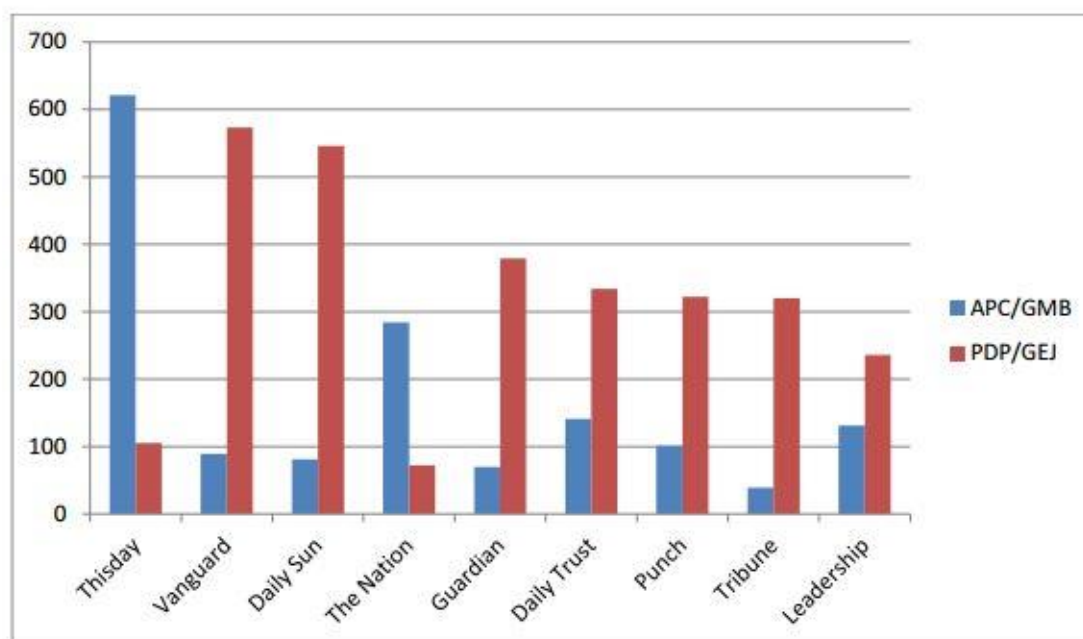


Chart 3: Beneficiary of Newspapers adverts

Table 4: **Summary of cumulated Spending by PDP/GEJ/Pro-GEJ support Groups for the entire campaign period (November 14, 2014 – March 28, 2015).**

Newspaper	December	Jan/Feb	Feb/March	Total for PDP/GEJ
Blueprint		199,500		199500
Business Day		18,574,500	14,332,500	32907000
Daily Sun	32,450,667	199,176,774	242,682,805	474,310,246
Daily Trust	24,718,827	103,802,418	123,556,267	252,077,512
Guardian	17,073,000	153,030,064	168,329,332	338,432,396
Leadership		57,969,124	157,765,680	215734804
New Telegraph		6,888,525	99,843,128	106731653
News Watch Times			11,340,000	11340000
Nigerian Pilot		40,276,250	48,832,500	89108750
Nigerian Tribune	6,595,010	99,721,125	178,319,010	284,635,145
Punch	23,299,281	106,625,791	156,060,256	285,985,328
Tell Magazine		7,205,288		7205288
The Nation	5,271,145	17,483,182	19,672,877	42,427,204
The News		500,000	310,013,550	310513550
Thisday	23,450,000	179,373,500	269,067,875	471,891,375
Vanguard	17,325,000	170,533,125		187,858,125
Totals	150,182,930	1,161,359,166	1,799,815,780	3,111,357,876

Source: Author

TELEVISION, RADIO and OUTDOOR BILLINGS – January 2014 – APRIL 2015

Advertisers (Political)	TELEVISION	RADIO	OUTDOOR	Total
PEOPLES DEMOCRATIC PARTY (PDP)	856,033,681.00	250,251,288.00	616,612,143.43	1,722,897,112.43
ALL PROGRESSIVE PARTY (APC)	591,265,068.00	270,322,442.00	519,697,438.53	1,381,284,948.53
TRANSFORMATION AMBASSADORS NIG (TAN)	212,122,280.00	150,285,147.32	155,225,876.49	517,633,303.81
	1,659,421,029.00	670,858,877.32	1,291,535,458.45	3,621,815,364.77

A political pressure group

Issues in the 2015 Presidential Election Advertising Campaigns

The first issue observed in the advertising billings in the 2015 presidential elections campaigns is that the two major political parties – the PDP and the APC – is that they both overshot the election campaigns spending ceiling put in place by the Federal Government. Section 91(2) of the Electoral Act stipulates that “the maximum election expenses to be incurred by a candidate at a Presidential election shall be N 1 billion (One Billion Naira).”

Ekwujuru (2015) supports this issue of overspending by the political parties when he quoted Kayode Olagesin, the Managing Director of Town criers, an advertising activation agency, as saying that “there is no time in the history of the country that we witnessed this volume of campaigns. I tell you, I don’t see them spending less than ₦5 billion on each of the Presidential candidates.”

Another issue is the non-disclosure of the actual amount spent in the campaigns by the political parties. Audu (2015) supports this assertion when he stated that the true actual spending is not helped by the fact that Nigeria has a history of not coming out with election figures and data. According to him, the issue of non-disclosure of the amount the political parties spent on the 2015 elections prompted a civil society organization, Socio-Economic Rights and Accountability Project (SERAP), to file a suit to demand that all the political parties make full disclosures of sources of their campaign funds.

Ekwujuru (2015) quoted Andre Nduneche, Lead Consultant, Image Machine Advertising Agency as saying on the non-disclosure of political advertising spendings by politicians that:

The politicians are very secretive about these things. They will not want you to know how much they are putting into it, but from all indications, you can tell by the volume of the contents in all the advertising platforms which is running into billions of naira. Money that should have been in four years is now spent within a short period of time. So, we are looking at a very substantial amount of money.

The third issue identified in this paper is that since the political parties did not want to disclose the actual amount they were spending, knowing that they had spent beyond what the law permitted, they avoided going through registered advertising agencies who would have kept records of such spendings. Again, Kayode Olagesin supports this when he stated that “what is more interesting is to find out what portion of the advertising materials passed through professional advertising practitioners in Nigeria. I daresay a lot of them did not pass through the professional advertising practice. So it will not, therefore, have added that much value to the revenue of advertising agencies in the country (Ekwujuru, 2015). This supports the third principle of the Political Advertising Theory used in this study. This principle holds that political advertisers seek vote at any cost, even including a degraded sense of public regard for the opposition candidates and the electoral process.

However, though this study focuses on advertising billings, another issue identified has to do with adherence to codes and ethics of the advertising profession. We observed that since many of the materials did not pass through Professional Advertising Regulatory Agencies, such materials were exposed to the public without them going through the vetting procedures and subsequent approvals from the Advertising Standards Panel (ASP) of the Advertising Practitioners Council of Nigeria (APCON).

This supports the second principle of the Theory of Political Advertising used in this study. The principle states that political advertisers do not adhere to any codes or procedures intended to protect the public from the inaccurate and unsubstantiated claims in the advertisements (Iyengar and Simon, 2000).

Implications

The huge amount spent on advertising in the 2015 Presidential campaigns would naturally have certain implications on different sectors of the Nigerian economy. Some of the implications include the following:

Firstly, no matter how one looks at it the political advertising copies were written by advertising experts, whether from Nigeria or not, that would translate to money for such script writers. But the main thing happened for the advertising agencies who engaged in the media buying – negotiating and subsequently paying for the spaces on the pages of the newspapers and the air time for the radio and television. This is supported by the President of the Association of Advertising Agencies of Nigeria (AAAN), Kelechi Nwosu, who stated that “in theory, an election year should mean that a lot more agencies are pushing messages for the

politicians. I am currently aware that some agencies are working for some political campaigns. However, best case scenario is for the political candidates to appoint agencies to take the responsibility fully and not subcontract the campaigns via political sources (Audu, 2015).

Apart from the advertising agencies, media houses were also benefitting from the advertising revenue 'windfall' that came from the 2015 Presidential campaign advertisements. It is a well-known fact that newspapers survive through advertising revenue. So, 2015 could be said to have been a very good year for newspaper publishers.

Salman (2015) supports this finding when he found out that 16 National newspapers made an aggregate sum of N 3,835,898,475 from the Presidential candidates of the two major opposition parties of PDP and APC between November 14, 2014 and March 28, 2015. Out of this, PDP spent N3,111,357,876 (more than four times what APC spent), while APC spent N724,540,609. So, this in essence was a windfall for the benefitting newspapers. The same could be said of television and radio stations all over the country, especially, NTA and FRCN that enjoy the widest networks in the country. This could also be applicable to Outdoor Advertising Agencies in the country. It was truly a great moment for the press and outdoor advertising agencies. Interestingly, data from Phd Communications (2016), a leading media buying and tracking agency, reveals that the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) spent a total of N1,722,897,112 on television, radio and outdoor advertisement while the All Progressive Congress (APC) spent N1,381,284,948 on the same media platforms. Also, the Transformation Ambassadors of Nigeria (TAN), a political pressure group that supported the then President Goodluck Jonathan of the PDP, spent N517,633,303 on these media platforms.

From the foregoing, it is obvious that the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) with its support group, the Transformation Ambassadors of Nigeria spent N2, 240,530,416. This is a very huge political advertising spending when the amount spent on newspaper advertising is considered.

Meanwhile, it should be noted here that figures are strictly spending made by the two political parties and the number one pressure group that supported the then Federal Government. If the amount spent by individuals and other not-too-strong pressure groups are added, the amount would certainly be astronomical. Added to this is the fact that smaller political parties without financial muscle to invest in political advertising will always lose out in the elections as the playing field will limit their reach.

As observed by Obi (2015), the use of these platforms was due to the fact that the politicians needed to tell a lot of stories. They wanted people to have a recall by seeing the same advertisements, the same faces, and the same messages over and over.

Finally, the implication of the huge advertising billings of the 2015 Presidential campaign would be that the financial supporters of the campaigns would be favoured in terms of appointments and policies to the detriment of ordinary citizens who may have something to offer but did not have the money to foot part of the political advertising bills of the candidates. It could be deduced that this may have been what played out where majority of the people kicked against most ministerial nominees of President Buhari, but they still got appointed.

Prat (2002) supports this assertion when he stated that since differences in campaign spending can influence the outcomes of elections in favor of deep-pocketed candidates, one concern is that this may give candidates an incentive to cater to wealthy special interests for financial support. Insofar as elected officials may reward contributors for their support, this could cause policies to be swayed in favor of large contributors and away from ordinary citizens.

Conclusion

It is evident that large advertising bills were picked by the political parties during the 2015 Presidential elections – especially so by the two major political parties in Nigeria, the PDP and the APC. The politicians were accused of using public funds to finance the elections. But whether this is true is an issue for another day. However, the political advertising that took place during the electioneering meant good business for newspaper publishers, radio and television stations and to advertising agencies in the country. It suffices that the volume of political advertising executed through the mass media does not necessarily translate into winning an election. This can be seen in the fact that the PDP spent more than three times (N5,351,888,292), the amount spent by the APC (N2,105,825,557) yet the APC won the Presidency.

This shows that media power is generally symbolic and persuasive, in the sense that the media primarily have the potential to control to some extent the minds of readers or viewers, but not directly their actions. On the contrary, psychological and sociological evidence suggest that despite the pervasive symbolic power of the media, the audience will generally retain a minimum of autonomy and independence, and engage more or less actively, instead of purely passively, in the use of the means of mass communication. In other words, whatever the symbolic power of the news media, at least some media users will generally be able to resist such persuasion. This suggests that mind control by the media should be particularly effective when the media users do not realize the nature or the implications of such control and when they change their minds. This is not without consenting to other Nigerian factors that may exert a lot of influence on voter behaviour.

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