

## Chapter 19

# The Art of Deception in Political Advertising: A Study of Nigeria's 2015 Presidential Election Campaigns

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Television advertising is a growing important aspect in presidential electoral campaigning. It accounts for a big part of the electioneering expenses. Presidential political advertisements are important sources of information to voters. Their messages may influence poll results. Using a content analytical method, this study examined 12 of the presidential campaign advertisements created for ex-president Goodluck Jonathan and his People's Democratic Party (PDP); and the opposition coalition flag bearer, Retired General Muhammadu Buhari and his All Progressives Congress during the 2015 Nigerian presidential election campaigns. The aim of this study was to identify the deceptions in these advertisements. This study found that both sides engaged in deceptive advertising. Buhari/APC engaged more in misinformation, lies, misrepresentation and spreading of unproven facts. Goodluck/PDP avoided misrepresentations and misinformation, but used lies, unproven assertions and pufferies. It is recommended that campaign advertisements be scrutinized before they are aired.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Presidential election campaigns provide opportunities for contestants to deliver some pieces of information that may persuade some voters to their favour. However, Kalla and Broockman (2018, p.148) point out that the impact of political campaigns to persuade individuals may have limited effects. Therefore, some contestants take to television and the social media to advertise themselves. Presidential political contestants spend millions of naira giving out persuasive information to reinforce the decisions of those

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loyal to them; change the perception of the ambivalent and hone the decisions of the apathetic. However, Opeibi (2006) points out that political advertisements were unpopular in Nigeria until the 1990s.

According to Alawode and Adesanya (2016, p. 237) “political advertising is a form of campaigning used by political candidates to reach and influence voters”. This type of advertising is not new in Nigeria or in any country where elections are periodically held. What may be new are the exaggerated half-truths and outright lies that campaigners and their message creators engage in, in attempts to secure more votes, split votes or discourage voting. Aririguzoh (2019) writes that some candidates and their supporters use music to tell their own sides of the stories or draw negative attention to their opponents.

Deceptive political advertisements misrepresent, omit or repeat messages that may likely mislead reasonably thinking voters. Some of their presentations are incorrect or unproven information. They deal with three issues: the advertiser, the message of the advertisement, and the consequential voter acceptance of the advertised product. Here, the advertisers are the politicians, their political parties and sympathisers. The message is the demand that voters give them their votes or at least not to vote for the opposition. The consequential voter acceptance is to believe the message as the truth and vote accordingly or see them as lies and do as occasions serve them against the advertised product (the contestant, his party, his message, manifesto or whatever they are angling to sell to voters).

According to Williamson (2002) the advertising message is what the advert claims. Millstein (1964) writes that the falsity of an advertisement’s claim must be examined against standard knowledge where such a standard exists to determine this truth. The claim must be a lie and invalid to be deceptive. In other words, the *truth* is a question of fact to be determined by evidence. Political video messages are deliberately created to deceive and misguide the electorate by presenting unclear or conspicuous disclosures to misinform voters about themselves or their opponents. This by itself is the art of deception. A deceptive audio-visual campaign message interferes with the abilities of voters to discern and make informed choices, especially, when these messages are critical in their making of decisions on who to vote for. It intentionally presents a false or misrepresents a fact so as to influence the voting decisions of the public. A false or misleading statement is literally false. Even if it is literally true, the statement may likely mislead, confuse, or has a tendency to deceive the public. A misrepresentation essentially deceives or has the tendency to do so to a considerable segment of the electorate and causes the opponent to lose goodwill and or votes from the members of the voting public. This takes deeper meaning when it is placed alongside Westen’s (2008) observation that the public’s decision to support political parties is based on emotions and not data or facts.

The Independent National Election Commission (INEC) is Nigeria’s body in charge of conducting elections. It registered 26 political parties with only 11 of them submitting the names of contestants running in the presidential race. However, it became evident that the battle was between the then incumbent president Goodluck Jonathan of the People’s Democratic Party (PDP) and the flag bearer of the opposition coalition, Retired General Muhammadu Buhari of the All Progressives Congress (APC). Both sides released a blitz of campaign advertisements. Their deceptive advertisements are the audio-visual messages that do not have empirical evidence or facts backing in part or whole any of their claims of accomplishments or accusations/allegations of corruption, sleaze, maladministration, cronyism, nepotism and similar denunciations or pronouncements.

The problem for investigation is to identify the deceptions in the Nigerian 2015 presidential television campaign advertisements of the PDP presidential contestant and his political party; and the opposition, the APC presidential candidate and his own party. This paper examines some of these presidential advertisements that were aired on national television or placed on the social media platform of *YouTube*.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Campaigning and Political Messages

Ademilokun and Taiwo (2013, p. 435) write that crucial “to the idea of politics are such issues as power, legitimization, persuasion, struggles for dominance, and coercion”. Presidential campaign messages carry the messages of the candidates, their political parties and their sympathisers. It is neither possible for the contestants and their sponsors to meet every voter on a one-to-one basis nor visit all the towns during their presidential campaigns. Even if they were to visit, Wood (2016) says they have unimportant and evanescent effect on voter intentions. Therefore, some candidates package their election campaign messages as videos that are aired on television. Aririguzoh (2012, 2014, 2015) comments that what is broadcast on television influence voters’ participation in, choice of presidential candidates and even the parties they vote for. Amodu (2008) says that the internet can also be used as a channel. Hence, some of the messages are placed on social media platforms like *YouTube*. Audio-visual messages are impactful because they combine sound with pictures. Voters have the opportunities to see, hear and build their opinions on the candidates running for the presidency.

### Nigerian Political Communication Culture and the Law

Political culture deals with the political orientation of the people: their attitudes, values, and beliefs about the political system. Swedlow (2013, p.624) writes that it tells who has the authority and power to decide; who gets what and what is possible in a group, organization, institution or other social units in a society. Outside the years of the military men in government, Nigeria’s political culture has danced around ethnic cleavages. This supports Oso’s (p.9) observation that the Nigerian mass media system has developed within the dynamics of the country’s political economy. However, in 1993, the collapsing of all political parties into two configurations - National Republican Convention (NRC) and the Social Democratic Party (SDP) - was the first attempt to expel ethnic politics. Article 21 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that “elections must be periodic, genuine, organized according to universal suffrage, and by secret ballot”. Nigerians go to the polls to elect leaders. However, the contestants’ electioneering campaign messages sometimes appear combative, provocative and impervious. Issues may be avoided and the individual contestants attacked. Political communication formats include the use of songs, music, drama, dances, town hall meetings, mails and media advertising, especially on television.

The National Communication Commission defines an advertisement as “any message, the content of which is controlled directly or indirectly by the advertiser, expressed in any language and communicated in any medium with the intent to influence their choice, opinion or behaviour. Batta, Mboho and Batta (2016, p.1) say contestants place their messages before the public in order to increase their value and chances of being accepted, and possibly voted for. However, Nigeria’s Advertising Practitioners Council of Nigeria (APCON) articulates the rules on political advertising in its code. These are:

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

**Article 72:** *Every political advertisement shall clearly identify the sponsoring organizations or individual, visually or orally. Political advertisements shall not explicitly nor implicitly exploit ethnicity, religion or any other sectional interest. (APCON, 2005)*

The National Communications Commission under the Nigerian Communications Act, 2003 and the Nigeria Communications (Enforcement Processes, etc.) Regulations 2005 respectively inter alia also provide that “advertisements must not unfairly discredit, disparage or attack other products, services, advertisements or companies, or exaggerate the nature or importance of competitive differences.” The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 as amended, the Electoral Act 2010, as amended and the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) Rules and Regulations establish the legal framework which regulate the electoral processes. They offer Nigerians the right to associate, vote, form political parties, register as voters, follow Election Day procedures, and resolve issues/dispute. Section 99 (1, 2) of the Electoral Act makes it an electoral offence to campaign in public earlier than 90 days before polling day or ending it less than 24 hours to the election. Section 101 (1-3) forbids the broadcasting or publishing of any material for the purpose of promoting or opposing a particular political party or a candidate during the 24 hours immediately preceding or on polling day.

## **The Act of Deception**

Misleading advertisement claims and the actual realities are never the same. There are always discrepancies. If these differences do not exist, nobody would be deceived, misguided or misled. According to Barnes (1962, p.601), a false and misleading advertising is based upon deceiving the buyer who is misled to purchase a product or service that he would not have purchased if he was fully informed with all the relevant facts. Advertising becomes false and misleading when it makes untrue statements. Even though every statement is literally true, it may still mislead if it leads towards false inferences; states half of the truth, or fails to disclose material facts. Boddewyn (1982) and Petty (1996) point out the effects of deceptive advertising: harming consumer interests, brewing cynicism and raising marketing costs.

A deceptive message must meet Chaouachi and Rached (2012) three descriptions: the act is intentional, the message communicator considers the information he is disseminating false; and he has a purpose for wanting to deceive. Buller and Burgoon (1996) write that deceptive messages are deliberately conveyed to a receiver to create a false belief or make him draw a wrong conclusion. Masip, Garrido and Herero (2004) point out that this intention to deceive distinguishes *false information* provided because of memory loss or incompetence. Petty and Kopp (1995) say that misleading advertising usually deploys tactics like exaggerated significance, confusing presentation, promises of proof, omission, and ineffective qualifications. They (p.43) offer a six-step framework in adjudicating deceptive advertisements: initiation, interpretation, deception, verification, remediation, and intention. The initiation step tells who starts the action against deceptive advertising. The interpretation phase identifies the claims that are seen as deceptive. The interpreters can be the industry regulator, the experts or target consumers. The deception stage relates to the standards for condemning deception. The applicable standards are the likely-to-deceive versus proof-of-actual-deception; gullible-consumer versus reasonable-consumer and low versus high percentage of consumers being misled. Verification states the party who bears the burden of proof: the challenger or the defendant. The remediation stage shows the appropriate penalty for publishing a deceptive advertisement. The intention is the impact of the advertisement. Section 43(a) of

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the Lanham Act of the United States provides equitable remedies to a plaintiff which include injunctive relief, damages, corrective advertising, and attorneys' fees.

### **Deceiving the Public**

Some political advertisements disinform and misinform. According to Ireton and Posetti (2018, p.7) "disinformation is generally used to refer to deliberate and usually co-ordinated attempts to confuse or manipulate people through delivering dishonest information to them". They (2018, p. 7) see misinformation as "misleading information created or disseminated without manipulative or malicious intent." Some politicians and their message creators employ the old tricks in politics: rumour mongering, misinforming or spreading fake stories about themselves or their competitors. While some of them may not tell the exact truth in their campaign advertisements; others give out misinformation to drag voters in the wrong direction. Yet others tell outright lies. Obviously, these are fake messages to mislead the members of the electorate and influence election results. Russo, Metcalf and Stephens (1981, p.119) say that advertisements that lie are unjust and carry three labels: fraud, falsity, and misleadingness. They explain that the *fraud* component (p.120) "focuses on the advertiser and assumes a deliberate intent to create false beliefs about the product." According to them, the advertiser's intention may not be to harm consumers. The *falsity element* refers to literal untruthfulness: a discrepancy between the claims in the advertisement and the actual realities. Falsity neither has to be sufficient nor necessary to prove that an advertisement is misleading. They explain that what matters is what the consumers believe. False claims do not harm consumers until they believe them and take actions in the directions pointed out by the advertiser. Some of the false claims are actually harmless, for example, colourful children cartoons. Misleadingness exclusively hinges on consumer beliefs or expectations after their exposure to the advertisement. There is a difference between the fact and what consumers believe. A misleading political advertisement creates a false belief about the expected performance of a contestant. The impropriety of deception lies in the fact that the receiver of the advertising message will behave in a totally different manner than if the advertisement contained no deception.

### **Ethics of Advertising**

Advertising ethics refers to what is morally acceptable or not acceptable in the industry so that human dignity is not eroded unnecessarily or the community made to suffer harm. The basic ethics of advertising hinge on what is legal, decent, honest and truthful. Advertisers and advertising agencies agree to a common sense of responsibility to the public, colleagues and competitors by not creating and disseminating misleading, dishonest, unfair or offensive advertisements. Usually, these guiding principles are presented as *Codes of Ethics*. Hannon (1989) lists the three morally right things expected in advertising. The first is that it is expected to conform to the canons of truthfulness. Secondly, it must respect human freedom and rationality in its persuasion. Third, it must answer all ethical questions. Garrett (1961, p.4) adds that it must be the 'tutor in the good life' by transmitting explicit and implicit values that must stand critical scrutiny. Beauchamp, Hare and Biederman (1984, p.1) say that no single problem can be paraded as the moral problem with advertising. However, problems on advertising usually fall into two classes: liberty and non-maleficence. The first robs a person of the capacity to make a free choice in deciding whether to purchase a product, good, or service because the information presented to him are deceptive and misleading. The second is the violation of moral rules that cause harm from non-disclosure. Estrada (2006)

says that deception is widely practiced by advertisers to increase their sales volume. Masip, Garrido and Herrero (2004, p.148) define interpersonal deception as “the deliberate attempt, whether successful or not, to conceal, fabricate, and/or manipulate in any other way factual and/or emotional information, by verbal and/or nonverbal means, in order to create or maintain in another or in others a belief that the communicator considers false”.

## **Social Media and Fake Messages**

Different social media sites provide platforms for users to create, send and re-create and re-send messages to others at the click of buttons. Politicians, their supporters and even antagonists have effectively deployed different social media networks to circulate their campaign messages. Social media messages are created and uploaded by their makers. This created room for some lies and other misleading messages to be circulated to Nigerian voters during the 2015 presidential campaign season. The emergence of the social media has heightened the spread of fake and fictitious messages. Incidentally, most social media platforms have share buttons that allow users to further spread misleading information to their on-line friends. Ecker, Hogan and Lewandowsky (2017, p.185) point out that repeating fake stories on the social media may increase the likelihood of some people accepting them as true.

Aldwairi and Alwahedi (2018, p.215) report that the social media and news outlets publish fake news for two reasons: to increase readership and as part of psychological warfare. For example, just before the United States mid-term elections polls opened, President Trump set the alarm ringing with this tweet on November 5, 2018:

*Law Enforcement has been strongly notified to watch closely for any ILLEGAL VOTING which may take place in Tuesday's Election (or Early Voting). Anyone caught will be subject to the Maximum Criminal Penalty allowed by law. Thank you! (Source: <https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1059470847751131138>)*

May be there were no illegal voters. But Trump grabbed world-wide attention. This single tweet was re-tweeted 36,685 times and garnered 130,008 likes. Brewer, Young and Morreale (2013) observe that events leading to the United States 2016 presidential elections saw a proliferation of fake news disseminated through the social media. Abu-Nimeh, Chen and Alzubi (2011) remark that there were claims of celebrities endorsing political candidates. These messages were shared by social media users who later found out that they were lies. Silverman (2016) remarks that fake election news out ran real news on *Facebook*. The reach of fake news was highest during the critical months of the 2016 U.S. presidential election campaign, where the top twenty frequently discussed false election stories generated 8,711,000 shares, reactions, and comments on *Facebook*. But there were only 7,367,000 same results for the top twenty most-discussed election stories posted by 19 major news websites.

Aldwairi and Alwahedi (2018, p. 215) point out that readers are forsaking traditional media and flocking to online platforms because these are faster, more convenient and allow them access to a variety of publications in one sitting. Mustapha and Mustapha (2015) add that digital media are more preferred to traditional media. They say that the digital media technologies democratizing features has re-awakened citizens' civic interests while the traditional media reinforce democratic malaise and political apathy. Mogaji, Farinloye and Aririguzoh (2016) discover that some people use the social media to vent their opinions on issues of interest to them.

## **PREVIOUS STUDIES**

The study of Chioma, Akinsiku, Ntiwunka and Ogu (2015) reveal that 60% of the voters in Agege, Lagos saw the 2015 Nigerian electoral advertisements as deceptive. Konkwo (2011) believes that political advertisements, especially in the broadcast media, are outright deceptions. Edegoh, Ezebuenyi and Asemah (2013) affirm that television political advertising positively influences voter preference for the advertised candidate. Obot and Batta's (2012) investigation of Nigeria's 2011 general election suggests that political advertisements in Nigeria are not issue based; and the few that are, focus on the national economy. Udende's (2011) observation of the presidential election show voters' poor awareness and knowledge of the entire political processes; and inability to make reasoned decisions on election matters. Because of their inadequacies, they voted along religious and ethnic lines rather than on critical issues.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The framing theory tells the audience how to think about a specific issue by slanting the story. McCombs (2005) writes that it examines the relative salience of attributes of interests. The creator of the message influences how readers look at a matter by drawing their attention to the object in the news and some of its qualities. Framing slants a story to give it a purposeful meaning. Slanting influences how readers will interpret and then make inferences on an issue. The media present news items in predefined frames to enhance their readers understanding. Goffman's (1974) framing analysis says that people interpret what is going on in the world through their primary frames: natural and social frameworks. The natural frames explain what happens in the physical world. The social frames see happenings in the world as the results of the whims and goals of people. Social frameworks spring from natural frameworks. Entman (1991) identifies five frames used in presenting stories as: conflict, human interest/personalisation, consequence, morality and responsibility for a cause or a solution.

Usaini (2009) remarks that the press plays the role of reporting national political activities. The mass media connect voters and politicians by carrying messages from politicians to the voters and vice versa. Presidential campaign advertisements are presented as messages to sell different products to the electorate. The products are the different contestants and their political parties. The messages of the advertisements are framed to persuade consumers to vote for or dissuade them from voting for a particular candidate and or his party. These consumers of political advertisements are the voters. Aririguzoh, Mogaji and Odiboh (2019) say that they may be in the urban, semi urban or rural locations.

Tuchman (1978, p.193) writes that a frame in a communication "organizes everyday reality". According to Gamson and Modigliani (1987, p. 143), this is achieved by providing "meaning to an unfolding strip of events". Shah, Watts, Domke, and Fan (2002, p.343) claim that frames promote "particular definitions and interpretations of political issues". Frames affect the behaviour and attitude of media consumers. Presidential campaign advertisements may frame contestants as noble citizens who are out to serve the people or as corrupt, irresponsible and inefficient.

## **METHOD OF STUDY**

For this study, a content analytical method was adopted. This method allows a researcher to observe specific variables of interest that are already published. Sobowale (2008, p. 18) calls these specific variables the *manifest content* of communication. The published contents are the presidential campaign commercials broadcast on television or placed on *YouTube*. Each advertisement was broken down into various content groups of interest. These codes were fed into the coding sheet. From this coding sheet, the summary of all the variables can be seen at a glance. Each variable was assigned a numerical value (See Appendix 1).

## **Sample**

The population of this study are all the presidential television advertisements. However, the number was too large for any meaningful study. Therefore, a purposive sampling was carried out. The advertisements sampled for this study were the official campaign:

1. Videos sponsored by the two political parties to support their presidential aspirants
2. Television advertisements sponsored by the two political parties in support of their candidates
3. Television advertisements sponsored by the political parties giving specific reasons why voters should support their particular cause
4. Television advertisements sponsored by the presidential candidates giving specific reasons why voters should support their particular cause
5. Videos sponsored by presidential candidates themselves to sell themselves to the Nigerian voters
6. Television commercials sponsored by presidential campaign teams in support of their presidential candidates

Based on these, a total of 12 commercials advertisements were selected.

The unit of analysis are the common elements in a deceptive advertisement:

- Outright lies: Coded 1
- Misrepresentation: Coded 2
- Misinformation: Coded 3
- Unproven information: Coded 5
- Puffery: Coded 6

The messages in the identified advertisement presented to the voters can be:

- Outright lies are fabrications that do not even exist in reality
- Misrepresentations are improper details that distort or present wrong contexts to the voters
- Misinformation increases anxiety in the voters and skew their opinions in favour of the informant
- Unproven information are pieces of damaging facts with no credible sources spread to discourage action in a particular direction. In this study, it is to discourage voters from casting their votes in favour of the man the unproven information is been spread about.

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- Pufferies are exaggerated claims that express personal rather than unprejudiced views which no “reasonable person” is expected to take literally. They are subjective.

## **DATA PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION**

The adverts are clustered by the advertisers: the presidential contestants, the political parties presidential dream campaign teams. The data for each cluster is presented in Table 1. Directly below the table are the interpretations.

### **Buhari/Osinbajo Campaign Song**

Against a single unmoving lapel picture of the APC, this advertisement presents the message that Buhari and Osinbajo are the change agents needed to make Nigeria a better country from what she is. The unmoving lapel may indicate stability. However, it misrepresents the then incumbent President Goodluck Jonathan and his government as agents of adversity that have inflicted undue hardships on Nigerians. The advertisement in the first chorus alludes that if APC is voted in, there will be:

*Enjoyment for the people*

*Igbadun for the nation,*

*Every day jollification, na the change we they want,*

*Maximum security, too much electricity, job opportunity, na the change we dey want...*

In the song’s bridge, this advertisement also makes the unverifiable claims that APC is the best thing to happen to Nigeria and will bring refreshment to the country to all the workers and market women. Of course, it boasts with the unverifiable information that the country will experience no more sorrows and pains apparently caused by the *bad government* of Goodluck and PDP.

*APC hmm hmm, na wire o, na elelele, everything go coole, elele*

(APC is the best, everything will be cool)

*Table 1. Data on APC presidential contestant, Muhammadu Buhari*

<b>ADVERT</b>	<b>DURATION (MINUTES)</b>	<b>MESSAGE</b>	<b>DECEPTION</b>
Buhari/Osinbajo Campaign Song	3.06	Change to Buhari/Osinbajo for Nigerians to live in enjoyment	Misrepresentation Misinformation Unproven information
Muhammadu Okechukwu Buhari’s Campaign Song	4.12	Change now to Buhari and away from waste, corruption and terrorism	Outright lie Misrepresentation Misinformation Unproven information
Theme Song for Buhari	3.15	Buhari to change Nigeria for the better	Outright lies Misinformation Unproven information

*Market woman go enjoy, elele hmm hmm o, all the workers go enjoy elele,*

(Market women will enjoy, all the workers will enjoy)

*My people nagode (gode) my people dalu (dalu) e rora ma gbese (ese)*

(My people thank you, thank you, thank you)

*No more sorrows and pain o for our nation o: (chakom)*

(No more sorrows and pain for our nation)

*We go shine after the rain our nation o chakom*

(We shall shine after the rain, our nation will be great)

(See Appendix 2 for full song)

### **General Muhammadu Okechukwu Buhari's Campaign Song (Hip Hop Version)**

This advertisement fell into the four categories of deception. The first is the outright lie of renaming Retired Muhammadu Buhari as Okechukwu. *Okechukwu* is a popular Igbo name for males. Buhari is not an Igbo man and makes no claims to any Igbo ancestry. In fact, he is of Fulani stock from Daura, Katsina State. This advertisement also misrepresented Buhari by subtly referring to his tenure as military head of state. He came into power through a coup d'état. This advertisement also gives poor misrepresentation of his achievements as a military head of state. This advertisement misinformed Nigerian voters with three things: picture of the blackened, burnt and dead bodies arranged in rows, the death of the poor and survival of the rich and the government that steals. Where these people killed because Jonathan and his PDP were in power? Or is this an allusion that more people will die if Buhari is not elected? The text on the picture of ex-president Jonathan Goodluck indirectly links him to stealing. Yet no court has convicted him of such an offence. This is another lie. Also this particular advertisement provided some pieces of information without any credible attribution. Examples are statements that Buhari came into power as military head of state, there were "extreme corruption, waste of resources and mismanagement of funds and religious intolerance" and he ... "paid all our debts, inflation rate dropped from 22% to 5%., masterminded the construction of 20 oil depots". The advertiser cleverly forgot to tell the voters that these claims were probably relevant between December 31, 1983 - 27 August 1985 while Buhari was still military head of state. The election he was contesting took place in 2015: a clear 32-year time gap.

### **Theme Song for Buhari**

This campaign advertisement contains four of the classes of deception: outright lies, misrepresentations, misinformation and unproven information. These are outright lies that:

*Buhari will ban the corruption now now*

*Buhari will stop Boko Haram now now*

*Buhari will stop the pillow dancing now now*

*Buhari will provide the shelter now now ...*

They are big lies to claim that corruption and terrorism can be stopped right on the spot. It is also unbelievable that shelter can be provided immediately simply because some time is needed to implement the processes and even to build. Neither can the interesting *pillow dancing* be decreed to stop right away.

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*Table 2. Data on APC's presidential advertisements*

<b>ADVERT</b>	<b>DURATION (MINUTES)</b>	<b>MESSAGE</b>	<b>DECEPTION</b>
Abduction APC Campaign Video	1.03	Insecurity Vote for change	Outright lies Misrepresentation
APC Presidential Advert for Buhari	0.59	Vote for change to boost the economy	Misrepresentations
APC/Buhari Campaign Song	1.52	Vote Buhari to change Nigeria	Misrepresentation Misinformation Unproven information Puffery

People use pillows in private places. How will Buhari stop people from dancing with their pillows in their private domains? The truth is that corruption cannot be banned. But corrupt officers can be jailed on conviction. However, steps can be taken to reduce or stop corruption. This advertisement also misinformed the voters by claiming that Nigeria is going “through exile in government. The bad government is ruling us”. These are also unproven information.

### **Abduction APC Campaign Video**

This campaign video lies by saying that Goodluck Jonathan was dancing at a political rally less than 24 hours after over 200 girls were abducted in Chibok. The video does not show Goodluck dancing. Neither were the people standing with him. Here were not even in a dance venue. In fact, a tweet from one Nasir El-Rufai on April 21, 2014 at 10.24 even contradicts the dancing theory with its message that Goodluck was in Kano barely 24 hours after 100 people were bombed in Nyanya and 200 young girls were abducted by *Boko Haram* terrorists ([pic.twitter.com.UZiTMqeQB0](http://pic.twitter.com/UZiTMqeQB0); [fb.me/3AVgJCdcy](https://fb.me/3AVgJCdcy)). The campaign season was under the dark skies of *Boko Haram* detonating bombs that killed and maimed hundreds of people. This advert misrepresents by telling voters that Buhari has “faced even bigger problems and fixed them immediately once, and for all”. It also misleads voters by saying that “the kidnapers have threatened that their next target are your kids” just to make the voters more willing to vote in APC. It also puffs that Buhari can “protect you and your children!”

### **APC Presidential Advert for Buhari**

This advert misrepresents because it gives details that distort present realities. The advert claims that Buhari’s regime reduced inflation from 23% to 4% within two years; chased back Chadian soldiers who invaded 19 islands in Lake Chad in 1983; and impacted lives through development projects sponsored by the Petroleum Trust Fund. These were historical recounts of what happened more than three decades ago. For example, it was in 1983 that the Chadians were pursued back to their country when he was the General Officer Commanding of an Armoured Division. They do not reflect current realities. This same advert also misinforms the voters that he would uproot corruption and looting, provide national security and restore our reputation. The common man in the street is given the impression that Nigeria is a country under siege and inadmissible into the international fora.

## **APC/Buhari Campaign Song**

*Shey na dem, na we or who  
No one wants to take the blame  
For what we've become  
See the land God gave us  
A gift to us  
How did we turn our blessing into a curse?  
The world used to envy us ... (See Appendix 3 for full song)*

From the lines of this campaign song, some misrepresentations can be seen. Apparently referring to the then incumbent government the song asks who Nigerians should blame for the woes of their nation since no person wants to take the blame. The song alludes that what God gave Nigeria as a gift has now turned into a curse and Nigerians have turned from being envied to been ignored. This advertisement also misinforms by increasing anxiety among the voting public with the stanzas that

*.... Back when we had a voice  
But now we have failed  
Now they ignore us  
Our lives is like a circus  
When we speak, they won't hear us ...*

It goes further to furnish more lines:

*We all turn religious  
Praying God to help us  
Cos the system has failed us  
Corruption surrounds us  
And everybody is crying*

It is not possible for everybody to cry. Equally, the advertisement describes Buhari as “a man with foresight”. These are mere puffery and deceptive. The allegation of ‘corruption surrounding’ us is presented as unproven information. The courts have not yet convicted Jonathan or any member of his cabinet for corruption.

## **Goodluck Campaign Video**

This advertisement does not tell the truth that all voters from the north, south, east and west of Nigeria are shouting with mighty voices for Goodluck to be re-elected. Neither is it the truth that everybody is crying that Goodluck is “the man that is right”. This advertisement engages in puffing because its claims are over exaggerated.

*From the North  
To the South*

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*Table 3. Data on Goodluck's presidential advertisements*

<b>ADVERT</b>	<b>DURATION (MINUTES)</b>	<b>MESSAGE</b>	<b>DECEPTION</b>
Goodluck Campaign Video	1.00	Re-election of Goodluck	Outright lies Pufferies
Official Goodluck Jonathan Campaign Theme Song ( <i>I believe in Goodluck Jonathan</i> )	3.39	Continuity of Goodluck	Puffery
Official Goodluck's Campaign Song	4.31	Continuity	Misrepresentation Puffery

*From the East*

*To the West*

*There is a sound all around*

*A mighty voice to be heard*

*Everybody is crying*

*Goodluck*

*Can you hear the mighty shout?*

*Goodluck*

*It is a call from the fatherland*

*For the man that is right*

*Goodluck Jonathan*

### **Official Goodluck Jonathan Campaign Theme Song (I Believe in Goodluck Jonathan)**

The message of this colourful commercial to the voters is that Jonathan has what it takes to lead Nigeria to a place of pride. In fact, the idyllic words of the commercial paint him as servant-leader out for the best interests of Nigeria without saying exactly how:

*I heed the call to defend our nation*

*I see the light at the end of the tunnel*

*I see the dreams of those people that have died and the hopeful which we survived*

*And the promise, we are grateful*

*I see the man with the will and the passion to serve and to lead our nation*

*I see a man who is willing to fight, who is determined to bring the light*

*Who has shown himself a leader*

*I believe in Goodluck Jonathan*

*I believe Nigeria has a chance to rise again and take its place of pride and glory*

*I believe in Goodluck Jonathan*

*I believe that he has what it takes to lead our nation to its place of pride and glory ....*

All these are words of puffery. Any person can hide under them.

## Goodluck’s Campaign Song

This advertisement as presented by Kaptain makes unproven claims that Jonathan has the “winning formula” and can solve “all our problems” without any explanations. It alluded to the fact that voting Jonathan would lead to continuity, stability and prosperity in Nigeria. It also puffs that this contestant is fresh, tried and tested and therefore he is the man that voters want, and should therefore vote for.

## Goodluck Sit Down (Official Campaign Music)

This particular advertisement is entertaining. Yet it has some deceptions. First are the outright lies that the presidential seat is Jonathan’s own even though the election was yet to hold as at the time the campaigns were running and that Nigerians were begging him not to go away from the Presidential Office. Incidentally, he did not win this particular election. The pictures of the smiling *almajiri* children in clean school uniform look suspicious. Their facial features look more like school children from the southern part of Nigeria and not from the North where most of the *almajiris* live. It is an exaggeration to label him as the “perfect man” that has “the masterplan” for Nigeria. Hence, this is puffery and deceptive.

## PDP/Goodluck Jonathan Campaign Commercial

The picture showing that the Goodluck Jonathan-led administration has improved access to tertiary education is an outright lie. The picture is that of graduands of Fisk University, Nashville, Tennessee. They were in their graduation regalia, standing in front of their school’s Cravath Hall. These are not Nigerians and Fisk University is not in Nigeria. Was Jonathan providing more access to Americans to study in Nigeria or for Nigerians to go and study in the United States?

## PDP Advert (Jonathan Na You Win) (See Appendix 4)

This advertisement came out as a song. The first lie is that Goodluck was declared the winner for an election that was yet to hold. The second one is to claim that he is surely coming back to occupy the

*Table 4. Data on PDP’s presidential advertisements*

ADVERT	DURATION (MINUTES)	MESSAGE	DECEPTION
Goodluck Sit Down (Official Campaign Music)	3.13	Continuity	Outright lies Misrepresentation
PDP/Goodluck Jonathan Campaign Commercial	1.36	Continuity for a better Nigeria	Outright lie
PDP Advert ( <i>Jonathan Na You Win</i> )	2.26	Vote Goodluck back to the presidential office	Outright Lies Puffery

## ***The Art of Deception in Political Advertising***

presidential office. The circle of deception is completed with three puffs: that he is the right candidate; he is the only man who can make this country better and that he will make Nigeria so flourishing that even her enemies will be prostrating for her. (See Appendix 4)

## **DISCUSSION**

Both contestants, their parties and supporters created attention-grabbing advertisements to sell themselves to the Nigerian electorate. Most of them were presented as songs that people can easily sing along to or as music that can be danced to. It is necessary to point out that the Buhari/APC front produced more attack and negative advertisements when compared to the Goodluck/PDP group. Buhari/APC advertisements were issue driven. The issues revolved around corruption and security. They hammered on the deep insecurity pervading the country primarily because of *Boko Haram* terrorists. The messages of the advertisements were framed to activate voters' judgments that Goodluck did not deserve to be re-elected. Nevertheless, there were some deceptions artfully woven into the advertisements of either camps.

Most of the deceptions from the Buhari/APC group are misrepresentations, misinformation, unproven pieces of information and lies. Probably, the reason for misinforming the citizenry was to make the voters' worried enough and forcefully build their determination not to have Goodluck Jonathan and PDP return to power. Buhari and his strategists succeeded in drawing votes to themselves. He was declared the winner of the presidential election. Their advertisements presented the opposition's government as corrupt, inept and ineffective. However, they did not present evidence to support these claims. Misrepresentations pervert the truth because the receivers of the message do not have sufficient information to make either reasonable or rational decisions. They are left to draw their own conclusions, which usually are wrong. Of course, this is what the deceiver wanted in the first place! The achievements Buhari made during his military regime were highlighted as if they have just happened. Meanwhile, these were made more than thirty years ago and in the mid-1980s. It was his team that supplied all the information without any authentication from any other source. The suggestions that he will uproot corruption and make all Nigerians to enjoy are questionable. Although corruption might be a societal malaise, yet it starts in the minds of dishonest public officers who abuse the power entrusted on them for their own selfish gains. There is no way that Buhari can ban corruption simply because he cannot ban Nigerians.

The next line of deception are the lies and puffery. Lies are not truths. Their avowals cannot be verified because they do not exist. They are the imaginations of the senders of the deceptive advertisements. Pufferies are also not the plain truth. But no reasonable person is expected to make a serious decisions based on them. The APC/Buhari used pufferies the least. Expectedly, the receivers or voters who may never know the truth try to create a wrong meaning out of the words, pictures, colour or whatever is used in the advertisement to pass across the message.

Goodluck/PDP advertisements are colourful and entertaining. Popular Nollywood actors and actresses, comedians as well as musicians added star power. The message creators wanted to draw on their large fan bases to endorse Jonathan's candidacy. A closer look at the advertisements used by him and his political party show that they avoided the deception of misinformation and presenting unproven facts. However, some of the campaign advertisements contained lies, misrepresentation and pufferies. As the incumbent president running for a re-election, may be, he knew it was unwise to misinform or present

messages that have no concrete facts because such can be easily verified. This may be the reasons why his campaign advertisements were not issue based. The Jonathan/PDP advertisements were more on the defensive against the onslaught of the opposition. He also reeled out his own accomplishments in office. The pufferies painted him as the saviour that Nigeria needed. In political advertising, there is a very big difference between pushing the truth, making claims that have no proofs and telling lies.

The reasonable voters have a way of making liars pay: they damage their reputation as well as withhold their votes. Fake messages may enhance the campaign purposes of the contestants in the immediate. Rational citizens may question the politicians' integrity and the fidelity of their future messages when they find out that their messages are nothing but lies, very far from the truth and sent out to mislead and deceive.

## **FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS**

Future research should examine

1. The Influence of fake news on political participation.
2. A comparison of the political advertisements of 2015 with that of the presidential elections coming up in 2019
3. A longitudinal evaluation of the television advertising campaigns in the past presidential election campaigns

## **CONCLUSION**

Presidential contestants employ television advertisements to reach a wider number of voters. In the Nigerian 2015 presidential elections, the two prominent contestants and their parties vigorously employed these advertisements to lure voters: telling the electorate about their achievements and what they intended to do if they were to win in the election. However, some of these advertisements that were aired on television or placed on *YouTube* were found to be deceptive on different counts by telling lies, misrepresenting, misinforming, spreading undocumented facts and engaging in pufferies. However, it was found that the APC/Buhari advertisements misinformed, misrepresented and presented more unproven or unsubstantiated claims. The PDP/Goodluck advertisements told more lies and engaged in more pufferies or overstatements of what the regime has achieved that may be difficult to convince any sensible voter. Particularly, APC/Buhari campaign advertisements were framed to expose the alleged claims of corruption, waste and deep insecurities which the incumbent government appeared helpless to handle.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. A new statutory body should be established to regulate political advertisements. This body must properly define standard or plain meaning of a political advertisement to remove any ambiguity that may confuse the intelligent, the informed, the ignorant, unthinking and credulous fellow. It must provide a set of guidelines defining what is acceptable or unacceptable. This new body must

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enforce the Truth-in-Political advertising. Its National Vigilance Department should prosecute fakers

2. INEC should disqualify any candidate or party that tells lies in its campaign messages, whether it is to be carried on television or placed on the social media
3. The Code of Fair Practice should be enacted by the Advertising Council of Nigeria (APCON). This Council should sanction and de-register any of its member that produces fake advertisements for presidential political contestants and or their parties
4. The Nigerian government should enact legislations addressing the public dissemination of fake messages during presidential electoral campaigns and make public the prosecution of those who willfully flout them. All candidates must submit their campaign advertisements for scrutiny before they are disseminated
5. National Broadcasting Commission should withdraw the operating license of any television station that broadcast presidential election advertisements without the appropriate clearance.

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## KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

**All Progressives Congress (APC):** The major opposition party that forwarded Buhari as their presidential candidate.

**Boko Haram:** The terrorist sect in North Eastern Nigeria seeking to establish an Islamic caliphate. They have been in operation since 2009.

**Goodluck Ebele Jonathan:** Nigeria then incumbent president that sought re-election in 2015 but lost.

**Igbadun:** A Yoruba word meaning *great enjoyment*.

**Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC):** The body in charge of conducting general elections in Nigeria.

**Nollywood:** The Nigerian film industry.

**People's Democratic Party (PDP):** Was the government in power that presented President Goodluck Jonathan for re-election in 2015.

**Retired General Muhammadu Buhari:** He was a former military head of state and the flag bearer for the opposition, APC.

## **APPENDIX 1**

- Outright lies: Coded 1
- Misrepresentation: Coded 2
- Misinformation: Coded 3
- Unproven information: Coded 5
- Puffery: Coded 6

## **APPENDIX 2: BUHARI-OSIBANJO CAMPAIGN SONG BY OLAMIDE ‘BADOO’**

**Slogan-** APC!!!! CHANGE!!

### **Chorus 1:**

Enjoyment for the people

*Igbadun* for the nation,

Every day jollification, na the change we they want,

Maximum security, too much electricity, job opportunity, na the change we dey want.

### **Chorus 2:**

APC ehn ehn APC ehn ehn APC ehn ehn (x4)

Buhari and Osibanjo na the change we dey want

APC ehn ehn APC ehn ehn APC ehn ehn (x4)

Buhari and Osibanjo na the change we dey want

### **Verse 1**

E don tey we dey wait, na today, we go take the change (na the change we dey want)

As we they talk, them they feel, we dey do them they see, action is louder than voice o!

(na the change we dey want)

People for road o don know the thing e o, no need to scope o, chololo cholio, jalala jalii o,

Choboooo chobiooo, wetin you talk ooo, I say my people no para,

my people no vex, my people no stress,

We go give you the best oo...

(REPEAT CHORUS ONE AND TWO)

**Bridge;** APC hmm hmm, na wire o, na elelele, everything go coole, elele

Market woman go enjoy, elele hmm hmm o, all the workers go enjoy elele,

My people nagode (gode) my people dalu (dalu) e rora ma gbese (ese)

No more sorrows and pain o for our nation o: (chakom)

We go shine after the rain our nation o (chakom)

REPEAT CHORUS ONE AND TWO

### **(Instrumentals)**

APC ehn ehn APC ehn ehn APC ehn ehn (x4)

Buhari and Osibanjo na the change we dey want

APC ehn ehn APC ehn ehn APC ehn ehn (x4)

Buhari and Osibanjo na the change we dey want

**APC!!!! CHANGE!!!!**

**APPENDIX 3**

*Shey na dem, na we or who  
No one wants to take the blame  
For what we've become  
See the land God gave us  
A gift to us  
How did we turn our blessing into a curse?  
The world used to envy us  
Back when we had a voice  
But now we have failed  
Now they ignore us  
Our lives is like a circus  
When we speak, they won't hear us  
We all turn religious  
Praying God to help us  
Cos the system has failed us  
Corruption surrounds us  
And everybody is crying  
Who can save us  
All we need is one man,  
One man  
All we need is one man  
Who's ready to fight  
And fight for what's right  
A man with foresight  
All we need is one man  
Who's ready to lead us  
Lead us to the promise land  
Who is that man?  
It will take you and me  
And we can do  
All it takes to raise us from this dust  
No matter the cost  
We'll save the land God gave us  
Save her from destruction  
Everyone who hears my voice  
Make a choice  
We'll walk with our heads high  
The world will be watching  
We'll make a stand  
And they won't ignore us  
We all must remember*

*The strength in our number, eh  
If we all reach out  
We can reach out for that  
One man eh, one man eh eh  
All we need is one man  
Who's ready to lead us  
Who's ready to  
Lead us to the promise land  
All we need is one man  
Who's not afraid to say Yes  
Who's not afraid to dream  
And paint a picture for the future  
One man who's not afraid eh eh  
To lead us, just like Moses did  
One man, eh eh eh eh eh, One man oh oh  
We calling out for 'One man'  
Who's not afraid  
Who's not afraid  
One man  
To lead again  
All we need is One man  
Shebi shebi shebi shebi shebi na, One man  
All we need is one man  
Shebi shebi shebi shebi shebi na, One man  
All we need is one man  
Shebi shebi shebi shebi shebi na, One man*

#### **APPENDIX 4**

*Goodluck Na You Win* [Goodluck, you are a winner]  
*Listen up everybody, everybody* [Listen up everybody, everybody]  
*It's Goodluck again o* [It's Goodluck again]  
*Goodluck for 2015 o o* [Goodluck for 2015]  
*Jona, Jona eh Jonathan na you win* [Jona, Jona, Jonathan, you are a winner]  
*Jonathan, Jonathan na you win* [Jonathan you are a winner]  
*From 2015 to 2019* [From 2015 to 2019]  
*Jona eh, Jonathan na you win* [Jona eh, Jonathan you are winner]  
*Oya make we dey celebrate o* [Let's celebrate]  
*Because Goodluck Jonathan* [Because Goodluck Jonathan]  
*na the right candidate o* [Is the right candidate]  
*With Goodluck Jonathan* [With Goodluck Jonathan]  
*Nigeria go dey elevate o* [Nigeria will rise and rise o]

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*And all our enemies all of them* [And all of our enemies, all of them]  
*go dey prostrate o* [Will prostrate before us]  
*Common everybody sing* [Come on, everyone sing]  
*Goodluck is coming back o* [Goodluck is coming back]  
*He is coming back* [He is coming back]  
*Ebele Jonathan is coming back e e e* [Ebele Jonathan is coming back]  
*He is coming back* [He is coming back.....]  
*Jonathan is coming back o* [Jonathan is coming back]  
*Jonathan is coming back* [Jonathan is coming back]  
*Jonathan is coming back again* [Jonathan is coming back again]  
Eh eh eh  
(Hausa, Urhobo, Yoruba languages Interlude)  
*The only man wey go make this country better* [The only man who can make this country better]  
*You say, na Jona* [You say: He is Jona]  
*Make we vote am again o* [Let's vote for him once more]  
*Na Jona* [He is Jona]  
*Eeye, Jonathan carry lamp agade Nigeria* [Jonathan is our flagbearer]  
*Jona eh, Jonathan na you win* [Jonathan you are a winner]  
*Goodluck Jona* [Goodluck Jona]  
*Goodluck Jona* [Goodluck Jona]  
*Goodluck Jona na you we want* [Goodluck Jona, you are the person we want]  
*Goodluck Jona* [Goodluck Jona]  
*Jona eh, Jonathan na you win* [Jonathan you are a winner]  
*Everybody sing Goodluck is coming back oo* [Everybody sing Jonathan is coming back]  
*Oh yes he is coming back oo* [Oh yes he is coming back]  
(Hausa, Urhobo, Yoruba, Igbo languages Interlude)  
*For agriculture, Jonathan work!*  
*And education, Jonathan work!*  
*Road and entertainment, Jonathan work!*  
*The Sure P project, Jonathan work!*  
*You Win project, Jonathan work!*  
*Oil and gas*  
*Women empowerment*  
*Our train sure de work, Jonathan work oo*  
*Oya, everybody say Jona*  
*Shoki shoki for Jona*  
*Wellu wellu for Jona*  
*Limpopo for Jona*  
*Etigi for Jona*  
*Well rere for Jona*  
*Alanta for Jona*  
*Who we go vote for*  
*Jona!*

## **APPENDIX 5: SOURCES OF SONGS/MUSIC**

### **APC Campaign Video**

Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FrhZWQdewFY>

### **APC Advert**

Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gOr5a1md80g>

### **Buhari's Campaign Song by PITA**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Llpyt9-1Q5s>  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FKGGHeklu-c>

### **APC Presidential Advert for Buhari**

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=s4WJGSNh9bY](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s4WJGSNh9bY)

### **Buhari - Osinbajo Campaign Song by Olamide 'Badoo**

Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D57li8wyvMQ>

### **PDP Campaign Video**

Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4E9HDFipJ0Y>

### **PDP Advert**

Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w5JJA9a4V8Q>

### **Goodluck's Campaign Song**

Source: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=idd\\_pKip5cw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=idd_pKip5cw)  
Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=44P8IKXZdg0>

### **PDP Presidential Advert**

Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EuC-s02oY-Q>