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ABSTRACT

We live in an environment immersed in the mass media. Television is an important mass communication channel. Among its functions is the political education of the members of the audience. Television broadcasts may influence the voting behaviour of those exposed to its broadcasts. It is, therefore, not surprising that politicians have attempted improving their chances of winning more votes by using it to reach millions of voters simultaneously. Television is a channel for providing the electorate with useful information on the political parties, the contestants and the voting procedures. The operation of a functional political system and the election of contestants into some public offices depend on an informed electorate. This study set out to investigate if television broadcasts influenced the voting behaviour of the voters in Ado-Odo/Ota Local Government Area of Ogun State of Nigerian in their choices of presidential candidates that they voted for in the election of 2007. The main objectives of the study were to know whether television broadcasts increased the political knowledge and participation of the respondents and consequently influenced their voting behaviour in this election. Copies of the questionnaire were administered to a sample of 3,635 respondents. In addition, some of these respondents were also interviewed. The Pearson Moment Bivariate Two-Tailed Correlation tests were used to measure the linear associations between the respondents' exposure to television broadcasts and their subsequent voting behaviour. The chi-square tests measured the significance between the variables. The qualitative analysis discussed the possible reasons behind the respondents' behaviours. This study found positive and statistically relevant correlations between respondents' exposure to television broadcasts and their voting. The data show that television broadcasts actually influenced the voting decisions of the respondents in different degrees. Specifically, exposure to television broadcasts increased the voters' knowledge of the presidential election, of the candidates and of the political parties; made the voters to increase their level of political participation before the presidential election, for example, by registering to vote and actually going to the polling centres to vote and influenced the candidates and parties that they voted for. Lastly, television broadcasts made some of the voters change their minds from voting for their initial choices of candidates, to vote for another candidate.

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