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CONTENTS:

Editorial Board	iii
Editorial	v
About the Journal	vi
Subscription	vii
Contributor's Information	viii
Contents	ix
List of Contributors	xii
Profile in Business and Leadership: <i>Prof. Patrick Utomi</i>	29
Bretton Woods Institutions and the Challenge of Global Governance: The Case of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) <i>Igwe, Prince Ikechukwu</i>	29
Marketing: A Way Out In a Depressed Economy <i>Osho M.V. (Mrs)</i>	31
Empirical Analysis of the Effect of Credit Management on the Performance of Nigerian Commercial Banks <i>Olu Ojo</i>	32
Self-Concept and Attitude to Work of Auto-Artisans of the Same Sex In Siwudu, Kokompe and Suame <i>Koawo Edjah</i>	34
Perception of the Role of Marketing in Nigerian Politics: The Electoralates' Perspective <i>Rowland E. Worlu</i>	34
Enhancing Accountability in the School System for Improved Performance <i>Nicholas-Omoregbe, O.S., Fakile, S.A., and Adegbe, F.F.</i>	34

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PERCEPTION OF THE ROLE OF MARKETING IN NIGERIAN POLITICS: THE ELECTORATES' PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

The objective of this paper is to examine how Nigerian electorates perceive the role of marketing in democratic politics. The basis of this objective is that political parties (the major institutions of democratic politics) operate in a complex and uncertain environment, where they consistently reel out manifestoes that are hardly fulfilled. This gives the electorate a reason to suspect all actions and strategies of political actors. Since effective utilization of marketing strategies has the potential of bridging the perceptual gap between political parties and their electorates (Baines, 1996), this paper seeks to confirm this stance by exploring the role of marketing in politics from the perspective of Nigerian electorates. In pursuit of this objective, Nigeria was stratified into six geopolitical zones, out of which a representative sample of 400 respondents was drawn to respond to our questionnaire, 315 copies of the questionnaire were returned; and after editing, only 300 copies were found usable. In measuring the construct and analyzing the data, the paper adopted CETSCALE which was developed and psychometrically validated by Vida and

Amitrovic (2001). The findings show that marketing strategies do not play extremely positive role in politics. In fact, only 52% of electoral success in Nigeria is ascribable to marketing strategies while the remaining 48% derives from anti-democratic forces like government interest, godfatherism, ethnicism, and electoral vices. Based on these findings, it is recommended that the electoral reform should equip the electoral umpire to carry out its responsibilities without fear or favour.

KEY WORDS: Perception, Marketing Strategies, Electoral politics, Electorate, Role, Election.

INTRODUCTION

Prior to Nigerian independence in 1960, the colonial administration had organized a couple of general elections without any deliberate and systematic marketing programme undertaken in any of them (Nzeribe, 1992). Yet, political parties and candidates canvassed for votes, located offices in different towns and villages, etc. This explains why Henneberg (1996) noted that researchers in political marketing will continue to discover that political parties do not always consciously make marketing decisions although one might classify certain activities or processes as marketing management.

After independence, however, a new dimension was observed as political marketing communications started gaining ground. In 1963 elections, for instance, advertising gained prominence as notable politicians like Chief Obafemi Awolowo of the Action Group, used it to send messages to the public. Sales promotion also had its own slot when chief Awolowo used helicopters to write campaign messages in the sky (i.e. sky writing) to propagate his campaign messages.

During the series of election conducted in 1979 to usher in the second Republic, deliberate efforts were made by virtually all parties to persuade voters by using marketing promotional techniques like advertising, sales

promotion, personal selling, publicity, and even direct Marketing.

The trend continued in 1983 with the hiring of advertising agencies by some of the political parties to promote their candidates. The National Party of Nigeria (NPN), for example, hired Saatchi and Saatchi from Britain.

However, the best of times for political marketers in Nigeria came between 1991 and 1994 when Social Democratic Party (SDP) and National Republican Convention (NRC) which contested in the series of elections within the period continued the tradition of using professional advertising agencies. The SDP had a foreign team comprising British and America experts that worked with their Nigerian counterparts (e.g. Sunrise Marketing Communications).

The NRC also followed suit as it syndicated creative campaign efforts through Nigerian and foreign experts (O'Cass, 2001).

The result was that the SDP candidate (MKO Abiola) had a clear victory with 58.6% of all the votes cast, and having at least one third of the votes cast in 29 out of then 30 states in Nigeria (Ibodje and Dode, 2007)

According to Nnadozie (2007), the 1993 presidential election gained popularity among Nigerians and therefore generally accepted by the people. It was also acclaimed by both national and international observers as the most genuine, freest and fairest in the history of elections in Nigeria.

Scholars believe that Abiola's victory was largely made possible by the massive deployment of marketing strategies, though he never became the President for reasons best known to the then military junta (Achumba and Dixon-Ogbechi, 2004; Osuagwu, 2008).

Due to what public opinion perceived to be an injustice to the winner of June 12, 1993 elections, political marketing began to lose its salt as interest in politics began to wane in Abacha days (i.e. between 1994 and 1998, even with the existence of parties like United Nigeria Congress Party (UNCP), Democratic Party of Nigeria (DPN) Congress for National consensus (CNC), National Centre Party of Nigeria (NCPN), and Grass root Democratic Movement (GDM).

But between June 1998 and May 1999, political marketing activities resumed with the restoration of democracy in Nigeria by Abubakar. This culminated in the swearing-in of Obasanjo in May, 29 1999 as a civilian president.

The 1999 general elections did not particularly win the accolade of Nigerian and International publics because of the incidences of rigging, and other electoral vices. But there seemed to be a general consensus, even if unwritten, among Nigerians to tolerate the result so that the military will vacate the political arena (Nnadozie, 2007)

If marketing strategies could work in 1993 general elections, then there is a part it must play in our on-going political experience. That part is in the marketing concept which believes that our electoral process must be conducted in such a way that its outcomes are satisfactory to all and sundry. This is the crux and theme of this thesis. In pursuit of this theme, an analysis of the marketing strategies employed by the dominant political parties in 2003 general elections was considered worthwhile. The idea was to determine the extent to which marketing thoughts have pervaded the heart and soul of political parties in Nigeria. This helps to classify the characteristics of the Nigerian political market with a view to creating appropriate models for political marketing practice in Nigeria.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Element of Marketing in Electoral Politics

Essentially, politics is about power; but the struggle for power results in conflict and competition. Therefore, under girding political practice is the struggle for power which creates disagreement and conflict. Nevertheless, the effects of politics which are conflict and disagreement are never permanent, and must be managed for the improvement of society to be achieved.

From another dimension, politics is about policy. Extending this view, Bruce Miller in Nzimiro (1992) states that 'policy is a matter of either the desire for change or the desire to protect something against change. This also leads to conflict.

According to Nzimiro (1992), politics in modern society is expressed through political parties which are created to achieve the

goals of society. This is why political parties are organized around specific ideas often called 'ideologies'. Originally, they were formed from local communities and the spread of their influence evolve from the establishment of the electoral system.

The history of human civilization shows clearly that class conflict is an inherent characteristic of human societies. Whereas in the past, this conflict derived from disproportionate ownership of land capital, today it is basically expressed in the control of state apparatus and media.

What is more? Each class saw marketing as a weapon to be employed in the ideological war of politics. The result is that political parties have now become the platforms for rearing leaders who are keenly interested in the contest for power through the electoral system.

Politics now becomes the struggle to control the power base, as the state establishes its machinery for controlling the populace. The control of the populace is not always obvious for human nature abhors absolute dependence. Thus, political control is often disguised when the winning group controls political power, its constituent members, and operatives become the ultimate beneficiaries. Today, the electoral process has become the expression of the democratic form of struggle within a given class system.

A participant in this power struggle who is aptly called 'a politician' and whose aim is to be in government has to market himself and his party's manifesto. He must be able to convince his electorate that his party's programme is more relevant to their needs than his competitors'. In addition, he must convince them that he can ably represent them and ensure that his party's programme is implemented. According to Ohiwerei (2002), the political party can be likened to a company, the party ideology to a company's mission statement; the party manifesto to a company's marketing strategy/plans, and the party candidate to a brand. The logical conclusion following from this thought process is that a political party, if it is to be effective and successful, should operate like a business or a company. Given this analogy, there is no gainsaying the relevance of marketing in politics.

The success of any company depends on the success of its brands or services. Similarly, the success of a political party in an election

depends on the success of its candidates. It is imperative therefore for the politician to have a close look at what makes a brand successful.

In brand marketing, the key to success is a thorough understanding of the market, the consumer and the competition, by the help of the market research. The knowledge thus acquired helps in having a clear vision of the role the brand will play in the market. That role must meet a particular need better than competing brands. In other words, the adoption of a marketing approach in politics promises to bring about rationality in our political processes.

The Concept of Election and Electoral Process

In the current edition of the international Encyclopedia of social science Vol. 5, election is defined as 'one procedure of aggregating preferences of a particular kind.' The two features of this definition are procedure and preferences. By procedure, the concept is used to describe a special way of doing something. Preference connotes choice between alternatives.

In the light of the above definition, Ibodje S. W. and Dode, R. (2007) described election as a procedure that allows members of an organization or community to choose representatives who will hold positions of authority within it.

For Gwinn and Norton (1992), election is the formal process of selecting a person for public office or accepting or registering a political proposition by voting. They state further that an election is one of the means by which a society may organize itself and make specified formal decisions, adding that where voting is free, it acts simultaneously as a system for making certain decisions regarding the power relations in a society, and as a method for seeking political obedience with a minimum of sacrifice of the individual's freedom. The essence of a democratic election is freedom of choice.

For Eya (2003), election is seen as the selection of a person or persons for office as by ballot and making choice as between alternatives. Eya defines Electoral process as the method adopted in the selection of persons for political offices. He further sees electoral frauds or malpractices as improper, illegal, deceitful or immoral

behaviours and conducts which vitiate free and fair electoral processes. This definition will be adopted in this paper.

A fair electoral process, according to him, must have some basic structures, which include; statutory provisions establishing the electoral bodies, Delineation of wards/constituencies, Registration of political parties, Registration of voters, Recruitment and training of ad-hoc staff, Procurement of electoral material, logistic, screening of candidates, provision of polling agents, monitoring agents, actual voting, accreditation of voters, counting votes and providing avenues for settlement of disputed results.

Onyeka (2002) elucidates what characterizes a proper electoral process. For him, the basic objective of election is to select the official decision makers who are supposed to represent citizens' interest. He posits that an electoral process reinforces the concept of self-rule, celebrates it and legitimizes governmental power. Elections, according to Onyeka, extend and enhance the amount of popular participation in the political system adding electoral history started with restrictive voting based on property ownership and tax payment. The basic constituents of the electoral process according to Onyeka, include; political parties, political opinions, pressure groups and mass media. They all converge in the electoral process to determine who the leaders would be and ensure that the elected officials will represent their constituencies effectively.

Similarly, the 1987 Political Bureau Report gave a lucid clarification and interpretation of elections and electoral processes. It states that four basic conditions are necessary for the holding and conduct of free and fair elections. These include;

- a. An honest competent, non-partisan administration to run elections
- b. Enabling rules and regulations – Electoral laws;
- c. A developed system of political parties
- d. An independent judiciary to interpret electoral laws.

The Report underscores the importance of free and fair elections as a prerequisite and precursor for Peace, Stability and Progress in the polity. From the gamut of literature reviewed on the concepts of

“democracy” and “election”, Nigeria’s democratic and electoral processes have always accommodated, provided and projected the basic principles, tenets and features of democracy and elections, yet the incidence of electoral frauds and malpractices have continued to emerge through the electioneering years.

For our purpose, election is defined as a form of procedure recognized by rules of an organization whereby all or some of the members of the organization choose a small number of persons or one person to hold office of authority. Election is said to be free and fair where it is conducted in accordance with the rules and regulations to the satisfaction of all stakeholders. Furthermore, general election is the process in which all political parties contest for elective posts. . Ibodje S.W. and Dode, R. (2007) have itemized the functions of election as follows:

- Provides a means of selecting office holders.
- Provides for popular control, ensuring that those who govern are, within the constraints of the choices offered to the voters.
- Guarantees that citizen’s support will be given to the government.
- Ensures that government is responsible since the representatives are answerable to the electorate.
- Provides a basis for peaceful change of government.
- Provides a channel of communication between governors and governed.

However, the electoral process suffers diminutive conceptualization in political discourse, such that it is taken to be equivalent to election or electoral system. But the concept, to wit, reaches beyond the method of choosing public office holders; or the method of translation of votes into seats or decision as to who has won an election. Perhaps, the most beneficial way to comprehend the electoral process is to explore a descriptive conceptualization, which exposes the distinctive features of the process. This is necessary in order to make the idea of electoral process clear and inclusive.

According to Nwabueze (1993), the electoral process embraces within its ambit all the institutional procedures, arrangement and actions involved in elections. Specifying, he said; It includes the suffrage, the

registration of voters, delimitations of constituencies, the right to contest elections, electoral competition between rival political parties, body charged with the conduct and supervision of election, the method of selection of candidates within the political parties, nomination of candidates, method of voting, the actual conduct of elections, the determination of results, trials and determination of election disputes, electoral malpractices and their consequences.

Furthermore, the electoral process includes election observation and verification activities carried out by local and international bodies or both. It also includes the establishment of institutions and structures that will mobilize the populace towards involvement in the electoral process, and provides the rules and regulations that govern the process. Indeed, the electoral process is an all-encompassing process, which involves many issues and operations. The issues and operations are elastic depending on the type of political system and the level of maturity of the democratic process.

The electoral process can be divided into two parts, the Constitutional and non-constitutional. The constitutional aspect has issues that are prescribed in the constitution such as the body responsible for the electoral process and the independence of such a body: The non-constitutional aspect such as, voters' register, procedure at election, electoral offences etc., are issues that are more appropriately covered by Acts of National Assembly – i.e., the Electoral Law. The dynamics of the electoral process require such matters as registration of voters, method of voting – whether by secret or open ballot or by Option A4, period and time table of elections etc. to be non-constitutional in order to make allowance for easy and expeditious change in the system when necessary (Nwabueze, 1993). Therefore, the electoral process is a defining and regulating process in the democratic contest.

It is imperative to add here that the electoral system is an institutionalized procedure for the choosing of office holders by some or all of the recognized methods of an organization (op. cit). There are two types of electoral system: the plurality system and the proportional system.

Under the plurality system of first past the post, the person with the simple majority of votes wins. Under the proportional system, votes are allocated proportionally to candidates according to percentage scores of political parties.

According to Ibodje S.W. and Dode, R. (2007) a political party is an organized group with a clearly defined policy whose main aim is to win or retain political power. A party tries to win political power if it is the opposition, but if the party is in power, it tries to retain such powers.

Ideally, political parties are manifestations of differences in the social structure. A political party is therefore expected to represent a major interest group in society.

The functions of political parties in any democratic society have been summarized by Ibodje S.W. and Dode, R. (2007)

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Perception Theory

Perception occupies a significant position in political marketing practice. Scholars in both marketing and management have tried to explain its relevance in various forms and with diverse definitions. Achumba (2006) defines it as the process of selecting, organizing and interpreting stimulus received from the five physical senses of vision, hearing, touch, smell and taste. Perception begins when one is confronted with a stimulus or a situation. Walters (1978) defines it as the process by which an individual becomes aware of the environment and interprets it so that it fits into his or her frame of reference. This definition underscores the fact that perception involves both an objective component (information brought by the five physical senses) and a subjective aspect (interpretation in light of a person's experience). Osuagwu (2002) sees it as the process by which incoming stimuli received by consumers' senses are interpreted and transformed into meaningful picture. Robbins (2001) on his part defines it as a process by which individuals organize and interpret their sensory impressions in order to give meaning to their environment.

Perception is important in political marketing simply because electoral behavior is based on their perception of what reality is, not on reality itself. The world as it is perceived is the world that is behaviorally important.

While shedding light on the perceptual process, Zimbardo and Rich (1975) in Achumba (2006) argued that the perceptual system acts like a computer, taking in multiple sources of information, selecting, integrating, abstracting, comparing, testing, sorting, outputting and then repeating all these again and again. Each perceptual act is a construction or creation of reality based on all of the relevant past and current information available to the organization. For from being a direct experience of "things as they are" perception is thus a modified process of organized conclusion drawing about the real world of time, space, objects and events, based on much more than simply the stimulus input".

Factors Influencing Perception

Cases abound where individuals look at the same thing, yet perceive it differently. A number of factors account for this. These factors can reside in the perceiver, object or target being perceived, in the context of the situation in which the perception is made.

The Perceiver

For an individual to relate to his environment two factors are necessary. They are sensation and perception. Sensation denotes the effect associated with the stimulation of a sense organ while perception refers to the interpretation of sensation. A person perceives according to his needs, cultural background, past experience and motives. In other words, each person's background, needs, motives and experiences in life alter his interpretation of identical sensory data (Foster, 1982).

Achumba (1996) observed that several characteristics of the voter as a perceiver are important for understanding the effect of perception on voter behavior. Some of these factors are:

- (a) Thresholds of awareness
- (b) Importance of question

(c) source of political market stimulus.

Others are defense mechanisms such as projections, stereotyping, displacement and selective perception.

The value and meaning of the market stimulus depends on the context in which it is perceived. All of our senses have some limit to responsiveness to stimulation. Such limit have been identified as thresholds (Achumba, 2007). These thresholds exist in the literature. These are lower, upper, and difference thresholds. Robbs (2007) refers to lower threshold as subliminal perception of stimuli about which a person has no awareness. The term subliminal means literally "below the threshold. In psychological usage, the term is the level at which a person is aware of stimulus such as light or sound.

The Target

Characteristics of the target that is being observed can affect what is perceived. Loud people are more likely to be noticed in a group than are quiet ones. So too, are extremely attractive or unattractive individuals. Motion, size, sounds, and other attributes of a target shape the way we see it (Robbins, 2000).

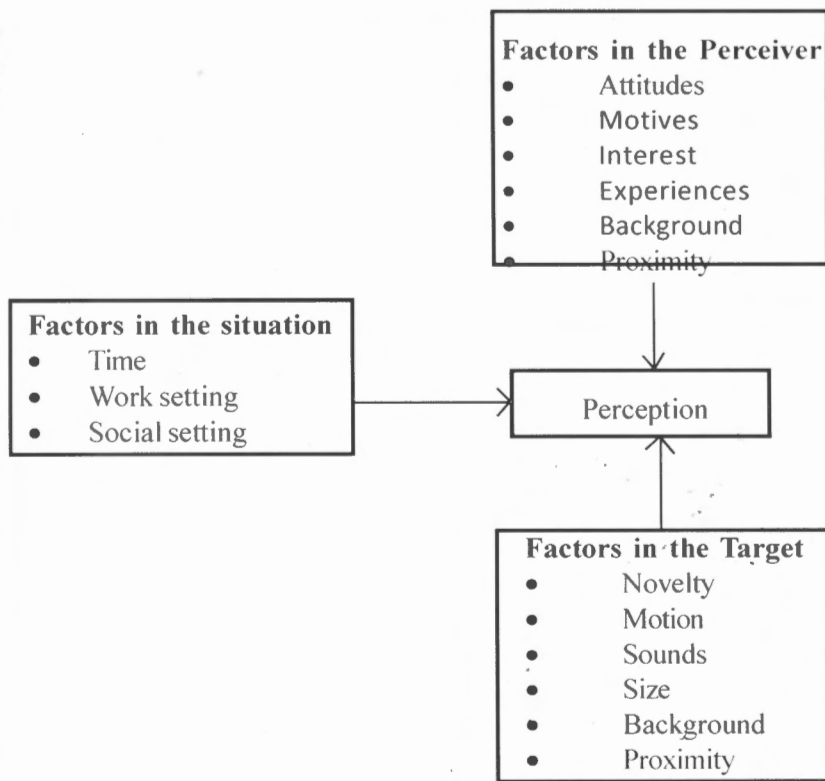
The Situation

The context in which we see objects or events are important. Elements in the surrounding environment influence our perceptions. In other words, the situation affects our perception. The time at which an object or event is seen can influence attention as can location, light, heat, or any number of situational factors (Robbins, 2000).

Figure 7.0 above summarizes the factors influencing perception.

Perception

Source: Adapted from Robbins, S.P. (2001), *Organizational Behavior* Figure 1.0 Factors that Influence Perception



ATTRIBUTION THEORY

The most relevant application of perception concepts to political marketing has to do with a person's perception which is concerned about making judgments about others. Our perception of people differs from our perception of inanimate objects such as desks, machines, or buildings because we make inferences about the actions of people but we do not make this about inanimate objects. In other words, when we observe people, we attempt to develop explanations of why they behave in certain ways. Our perception and judgments of a person's actions will be significantly influenced by the assumptions we make about that person's internal state (Barret, 1987).

Attribution theory has been proposed to develop explanations of the ways in which we judge people differently, depending on what meaning

we attribute to a given behavior (Kelly, 1972). Basically, the theory suggests that when we observe an individual's behavior, we attempt to determine whether it was internally or externally caused. That determination, however, depends largely on three factors:

1. Distinctiveness
2. Consensus
3. Consistency (Blankson and Appiah-Adu, 1998)

Internally caused behaviors are those that are believed to be under the personal control of the individual. Externally caused behavior is seen as resulting from outside causes, that is, the person is seen as having been forced into the behavior by the situation. If a party member comes late to a party caucus meeting, you might attribute his lateness to yesterday's party rally which lasted up to the early hours of the morning and then over sleeping. This would be an internal attribution. But if you attribute his arriving late to a major automobile accident that tied up traffic on the road that this party member uses, then you would be making an external attribution (Blackson and Omar, 2002).

Distinctiveness refers to whether an individual displays different behaviors in different situations. One would want to know whether the behavior is unusual if it is the observer that is likely to give the behavior an external attribution. If this action is not unusual, it will probably be judged as internal (Iyiegbuniwe, 2005).

If everyone who is faced with a similar situation responds in the same way, one can say the behavior shows consensus. Our late party member behavior would meet this criterion of all members who took the same route to the meeting were also late. From an attribution perspective, if consensus is high, you would be expected to give an external attribution to the member's tardiness, whereas if other members who took the same route made it to the meeting on time, your conclusion as to causation would be internal.

Finally, an observer looks for consistency in a person's actions. Does the person respond the same way over time? The more consistent the behavior, the more the observer is inclined to attribute it to internal causes (Barret, 1987).

Observation → Interpretation High

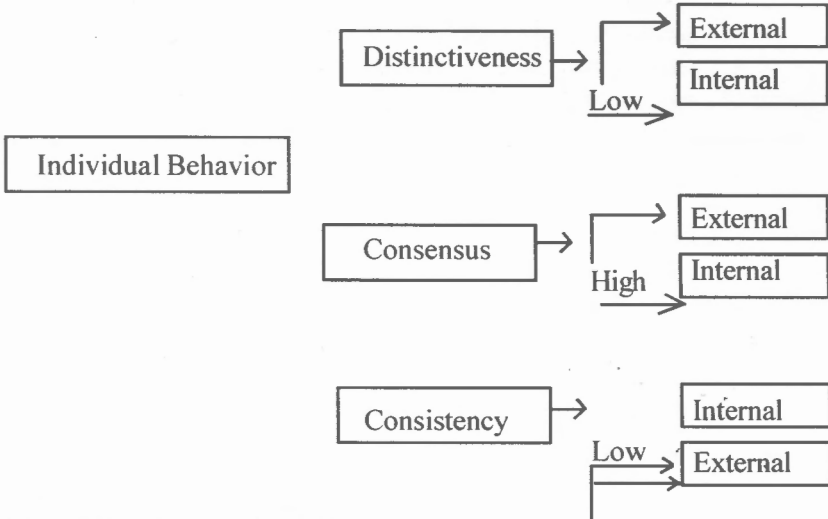


Figure 2.0 Attribution Theory

Source: Adapted from Robbins (2001). Organizational Behavior

Figure 2.0 above summarizes the key elements in attribution theory.

One of the more interesting findings from attribution theory is that there are errors or biases that distort attributions. For instance, there is substantial evidence that when we make judgments about the behavior of other people, we have a tendency to underestimate the influence of external factors and overestimate the influence of internal or personal factors (Ross, 1977). This is called fundamental attribution error and can explain why a political candidate is prone to attribute the poor performance of his campaign manager to laziness rather than to the intimidating profile of an opponent. There is also a tendency for individuals to attribute their own successes to internal factors such as ability or effort while putting the blame for failure on external factors such as luck. This is called the self servicing bias and suggests that feedback provided to party members in performance appraisal will be predictably distorted by recipients depending on whether it is positive or negative (Achumba, 2000).

SELF PERCEPTION THEORY

Self perception theory as postulated by Ben (1972) is concerned with how people explain their behavior. The theory argues that people do not always know why they do what they do. When this occurs they infer the causes of their behavior by analyzing their behavior in the context in which it occurs (Robbins, 2001). The theory assumes that people often gain self-knowledge simply by observing their own behavior, and drawing logical conclusions about why they behaved as they did. In particular,

Individuals come to know their own attitudes, emotions, and other internal states partially by inferring them from observations of their own overt behavior and/or circumstances in which the behavior occurs. Thus, to the extent that internal cues are weak, ambiguous, or uninterpretable, the individual is functionally, in the same position as an outside observer – an observer who must necessarily rely on those same external cues to infer the individual's inner state (Ben, 1972).

Self-perception processes are akin to introspection, but there is an important difference with introspection, we directly examine our attitudes, feelings and motives, with self-perception, we indirectly infer our attitudes, feelings and motives by analyzing our behavior. Another way of saying this is that only introspection involves directly consulting our internal states; the self-perception process is an indirect one that does not require direct access to our internal state.

CAUSAL ATTRIBUTION

The explanations people give for their actions are the key elements in self-perception theory. Formerly, those explanations are known as causal attributions. Causal attributions are answers to why questions (Weiner, 1985). Once we observe a behavior display from a person, we tend to attribute that behavior to a cause. This is what is called causal attribution. People also make attributions for their behavior. The attributions people make for events in their lives constitute an important source of self-knowledge. People can gain self-knowledge by making attributions for other people's behavior (Robbins, 2001).

The Current State of Political Marketing

It has been argued that the application of marketing tools and instruments in politics is nothing new (Perloff, 1999; Baines and Egan 2001). This may be controvertible, but what certainly has changed in the last 25 years is not just the magnitude of political marketing management but the belief those that political actors (i.e. political parties, politicians, governments, single-issue groups, lobbying organisations, etc) do not only act out but also 'think' in marketing terms. (Harris et al, 1999; Nimmo, 1999; Harris, 2001a). They believed that they do marketing management, and they try to integrate their use of marketing instruments in a coherent marketing strategy (Newman, 1994a; Dermody and Scullion, 2001).

The changes in the 'mind sets' of political actors have been tracked in several studies. (Jamieson, 1992; Scammell, 1994, 1995; Lees-Marshment, 2001; Wring, 2001; Wring, 2002b) and have been considered a 'revolution' (Lees-Marshment, 2001) or even a "new age in politics" (Newman, 1999). "Mind sets" of political actors" refers to the attitudinal and perceptual disposition of participants in democratic process. These participants will include political parties, candidates for elections, electorates, party functionaries and supporters.

In addition, political marketing application have moved from solely a communication tool to an integrated way of managing politics, be it policy development, permanent campaigning (Nimmo, 1999), or even governing (to the extent that government has become 'symbolic' in certain circumstances) (O'Shaughnessy, 2003).

Six main developments of applied uses of political marketing can be generated for most democratic political systems in the last two decades, and these are:

- * An increased sophistication of communication and 'spin' (Kavanagh, 1995; Kaid, 1999; Sherman, 1999; Harris, 2001b; Lees-Marshment, 2001; Palmer, 2003);
- * Strategies for product and image management (Scammell, 1995; Baines et al, 2002; White and de Chernatony, 2002);

- * News management i.e. the use of 'free' media (Franklin, 1994; Schnur, 1999; Franklin and Richardson, 2002);
- * More coherent and planned political marketing strategy development (Newman, 1994a; Butler and Collins, 1999; Kotler 1999; Lees-Marshment, 2001; Henneberg, 2002; Wring, 2002a);
- * Intensified and integrated use of political market research (Huber and Hermann, 1999; Mitchell and Daves, 1999; Smith and Hirst, 2001; Sparrow and Tunner, 2001; Sherman and Schiffman, 2002);
- * Emphasis on political marketing organisation and professionalization (Panebianco, 1988; Lees-Marshment, 2001).

However, most political actors are far from having an integrated and sophisticated understanding of marketing applications for their political exchange situations. Political marketing management in politics has caused some 'leading' parties and candidates to adopt a simplistic and populist "follower"-mentality, contributing to the disenchantment of the electorate and a resulting cynicism regarding politics in general (Henneberg, 2005).

Research on political marketing showing serious, intensive, coordinated research activities on marketing applications in politics constitutes a fairly recent addition to the area of social and non-profit marketing. The field of political marketing started to form about twenty years ago with several seminal contributions (Manser, 1983; Newman and Sheth, 1985; Farrel and Wortman, 1987; Reid, 1998; Harrop, 1990; O'Shaughnessy, 1990; Smith and Saunders, 1990) that introduced topical foci and in-depth analyses of marketing instruments; out of which none proffered a 'general' theory. However, research on political marketing quickly gained momentum, driven mainly by the dynamic development of marketing applications by political parties and candidates.

To provide a new understanding of some basic phenomena and the reactions of political actors, research on political marketing has become an established sub-discipline of marketing, especially in France, U.K, Germany, Australia, as well as the USA (Perloff, 1999). The need to describe and understand these phenomena instigated numerous

methods, the whole country was stratified into six geopolitical zones. Each zone formed a cluster whereby a particular state was purposively selected as sample unit. In selecting the samples, the researcher avoided states where gross electoral irregularities were reported by local and international election observers (Vanguard 26 May, 2003).

The Federal Capital Territory (Abuja) was included as the seventh cluster where a sample of 40 respondents was taken because these parties have their head-quarters in Abuja where strategic policies affecting the conduct and practice of political marketing are evolved. In all, 800 copies of the questionnaire were administered. The figure below paints the picture:

Estimation of the sample size of the electorate

Daniel and Terrel (2006) advanced the formula below to determine the sample size for estimating means:

Demographic characteristics of the total sample are presented in table 4.1 below. The geopolitical zone subsamples are similar with respect to the age of the respondents, but differ with respect to the average level of education, employment status and relative household income. Since the data collection was limited to major cities, the sample does not correspond entirely to the geopolitical zones compared to the general population of the geopolitical zone because people living in the cities are better educated the employment level is higher and so the is the household income. Our main maturation for limiting the survey to larger cities was only the concentration of enlightened electorates in these

publications in standard marketing and political journals (e.g. special issues on political marketing in the *European Journal of Marketing*, the *Journal of Marketing Management*, of the *Journal of Public Affairs*) as well as books and monographs (Newman, 1994a; Kavanagh, 1995; Scammel 1995; Newman, 1995b; Lees-Marshment, 2001; O'Shaughnessy and Hanneberg, 2002b) and also the establishment of dedicated conferences for a discourse on political marketing.

For example, since 1995 there has been an international conference on political marketing held annually, besides, a dedicated journal of political marketing was founded (Newman, 2002) and a Handbook of political marketing published (Newman, 1999a).

RESEARCH METHODS

This study adopted the two (2) common types of research methods. These are the survey, and ex-post-facto methods. The respondents for this work were officials and electorates of the four dominant parties in six geopolitical zones of Nigeria which constituted the population of this study. The zones and the states involved are: South-South (Rivers State), South-West (Lagos) South-East (Anambra State), North-West (Zamfara), North-Central (Niger State), and North-East (Bauchi and Bornu State). Cross-sectional type of research design was also employed because of the involvement of different parties and states in this study.

Sample size and Sampling Techniques

The sample for this study consisted of 800 respondents: 400 of these respondents were randomly drawn from the 4 dominant political parties. These party respondents consisted of party officials at the national, state, and local government levels in the selected states. The other sample of 400 respondents from the electorate consisted of all eligible voters in the selected states. The study adopted a combination of methods in selecting samples. One is probability sample selection method in which stratified and cluster techniques were employed. The other was non-probability sample selection method whereby convenience, quota, and judgmental samples were generated. In applying the above

areas which represent the natural entry points for political socialization and activism.

TABLE 4.1 Sample Characteristics of Electorate

	PDP	ANPP	AD	APGA	TOTAL
Target respondents	200	120	40	40	400
Actual respondents	155	85	31	29	300
Response Rate (%)	75.5	70.8	71.5	72.5	75
Share of female (in %)	39.6	46.0	49.5	49.3	46.1
Share of male (in %)	60.4	54.0	55.5	50.7	53.9
Average age in years (standard deviation in bracket)	40.73 (17.68)	38.20 (16.09)	38.29 (14.12)	39.08 (12.56)	38.95 (15.44)
Share of respondents who have secondary education and above (in %)	66.4	64.5	76.5	77.3	71.3
Share of respondents who are employed or self employed (in %)	67.6	53.5	55.0	62.7	60.0
Share of respondents who are married	53.4	57.0	53.6	57.4	55.1

Table 4.2 Perception of the Role of Marketing Strategies (Electorate Perspective)

RESPONSE	ELP		EFP		ENP		ECP		TOTAL	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
The perception that marketing strategies play extremely positive role in politics.	85	54.8	22	71.0	16	55.2	50	58.8	173	57.6
Formulation of marketing strategies to maximize benefits of the role of marketing strategies.	40	25.8	7	22.6	11	37.9	25	29.4	83	27.7
Electoral vices as negative role of marketing strategies	30	19.4	2	6.4	2	6.9	10	11.8	44	14.7
TOTAL	155	100	31	100	29	100	85	100	300	100

KEY:

ELP= Electorate of Leader Party; ECP=Electorate of Challenger Party;

Source: Field survey, 2007

Interpretation of Result

Table 4.2 above indicates that 54.8% of the electorate of the Leader party perceived that marketing strategies play extremely positive role in politics. The percentage of such perception recorded for the electorate of the Follower party was 71%; 55% was for the electorate of the Nicher party; and 58.8% for the electorate of the Challenger party.

In addition, 25.8% of the Leader party's electorate agreed that the party takes time to formulate marketing strategies in order to benefit from the role they play in politics. 22.5% was for the Follower party; 37.9% for the Nicher party; and 29.4% for Challenger party.

On whether electoral vices constitute the negative role of marketing strategies, 19.4% stood out among the electorate of the Leader party; 6.4% for Follower party; 6.9% for Nicher party; and 11.8% for Challenger party.

General Discussion

The cross-party comparison reveals that over 50% of the respondents from both the parties and their electorate perceived marketing strategies as playing extremely positive role in party politics. But this is not enough to conclude that marketing play positive role in politics. Hence, the study adopted CETSCALE which was developed and psychometrically validated by Vida and Amitrovic (2001). The scale measures perceptions of the appropriateness of variables.

The CETSCALE has been previously used and validated in various studies, including central and Eastern Europe (e.g. Linguist et al, 2001; Vida and Reardon, 1997). The three-item version of the original scale was utilized on this study. The scale was purified and pretested on convenience samples of respondents in the four political parties for its comprehensibility, clarity of instructions and length, after which changes were incorporated.

The CETSCALE has a midpoint of 25.0 which is the cut-off point between positive and negative roles, it is equivalent to 50% of the

perception of the role of marketing strategies. This is because the business of strategy formulation and implementation is critical to a party's success, not only at the polls, but also in governance.

Appropriate perception of the role of marketing strategies leads to timely detection of opportunities in the political marketplace, and eventual alignment of the party's strengths to the demands of the political environment. It is obvious that in Nigeria, the political environment is escalating toward higher levels of uncertainty, hostility, dynamism, and heterogeneity of players. Thus party leaders should know that competitive advantage derives from accurate perception of current trends. To also sustain the competitive advantage, competitive intelligence is of paramount relevance. Party leaders should develop formal competitive intelligence units responsible for formal programmes of gathering information on the party's competitors. Political espionage can also be developed for gathering information straight from competitors. This may take the form of using former and current supporters / employees of competitors. In short, a party should sharpen its feelers to be able to perceive this trend.

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CONCLUSION: The conclusion of our study can be captured in model 1 below.

MODEL 1: Relationship between Perception and Role of Marketing Strategies in Politics

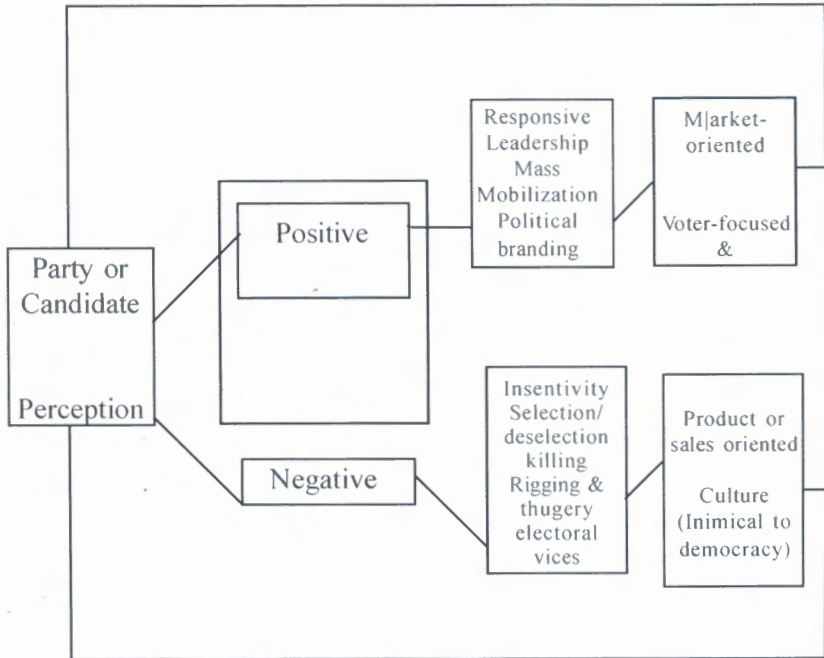


Figure 3.0: Relationship between Perception and Marketing Strategies in Politics.

Source: Designed by the Researcher (2009)

Model 1 above indicates that a party or candidate that has positive perception about the role of marketing strategies will tend to offer responsive leadership, engage in mass mobilization to earn the mandate of the electorate, ensure that his/her party or candidature is properly branded and positioned in the minds of voters, anticipate and manage conflict, promote democratic ideals in all spheres of operation. The result will be market-oriented, voter-focused and democratic culture.

On the other hand, party or candidate having negative perception about the role of marketing strategies in politics will tend to be insensitive to the yearnings and aspirations of the electorate, engage in selection or de-selection of candidates for election, involve in political killing and assassination, sponsor rigging and Thuggery during elections, and indeed other electoral vices. The result, of course, will indicate that such a party or candidate has product or sales-oriented culture, and as such constitutes a danger to democracy.

IMPLICATION FOR POLITICAL ACTORS

In the past few years, the Nigerian politics has systematically moved away from ideal democracy even where parties generally have good perception of the role of marketing strategies in politics. Under this circumstance, political parties fail to recognize the nexus between marketing concept and democracy. Essentially, both constructs are people-centered.

The good perception of the role of marketing strategies by parties and their candidates does not reflect in their activities thereby leading to slow growth of democracy in Nigeria. This is evidenced in the fact that Nigerian parties generally have weak democratic processes as reflected in their internal and external marketing activities. For democracy to grow in Nigeria, therefore, there must be a strategic fit between our parties' perception of the role of marketing strategies and their activities. In other words, there must be congruence of what the people demand and what the parties offer.

To receive the desired strategic fit, the party leaders should be able to understand model, interpret, extrapolate and forecast the marketing trends and concepts. The findings of this study have confirmed that the perception of party leadership, regarding the role of marketing strategies in politics, influence the responses of the party to its electorate and peculiar environment. For this reason, it is imperative for party leadership to have appropriate perception of the role which marketing strategies can play in party politics.

It is strongly recommended therefore that leaders of Nigerian political parties take seriously their gate-keeping roles by improving their understanding of marketing concept in order to enhance their

perception of the role of marketing strategies. This is because the business of strategy formulation and implementation is critical to a party's success, not only at the polls, but also in governance.

Appropriate perception of the role of marketing strategies leads to timely detection of opportunities in the political marketplace, and eventual alignment of the party's strengths to the demands of the political environment. It is obvious that in Nigeria, the political environment is escalating toward higher levels of uncertainty, hostility, dynamism, and heterogeneity of players. Thus party leaders should know that competitive advantage derives from accurate perception of current trends. To also sustain the competitive advantage, competitive intelligence is of paramount relevance. Party leaders should develop formal competitive intelligence units responsible for formal programmes of gathering information on the party's competitors. Political espionage can also be developed for gathering information straight from competitors. This may take the form of using former and current supporters / employees of competitors. In short, a party should sharpen its feelers to be able to perceive this trend.

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