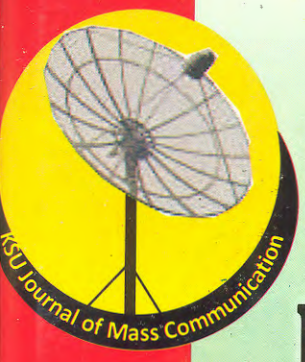

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The Role of Television Broadcasts on Voters' Participation in Nigeria's Presidential Election

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Abstract

Television's perceived power includes its subtle effects to induce behaviour. This study seeks to know if the exposure of residents of Ado Odo/Ota communities to television broadcasts increased their participation in the Nigerian presidential election in 2007. The study establishes that, indeed, television broadcasts have had a positive influence on the participation of residents in this particular election. They became more engaged in the election than they would ordinarily have done. Statistically, positive relationships were established between their exposure to television broadcasts and their increased political participation. The survey carried out indicates that their watching television broadcasts led to an increase in their involvement in this election, by making them take specific steps such as going out to register to vote; seeking out more information about contesting candidates and their parties; voluntarily joining campaign teams and political parties; and even persuading others into joining campaign teams and the voting exercise. Television broadcasts also brought about an increase in the number of topics raised for discussion between these residents and the people significant in their lives. It is therefore suggested that politicians, their parties and even the government can get voters to become more active participants in the electoral processes by packaging political messages and broadcasting them on television. Voters heightened interest in public elections will destroy growing public apathy to participating in elections and their low concern for who may emerge as the winner.

Keywords: Ado-Odo/Ota residents, participation, apathy, television broadcasts.

Introduction

Television broadcasting is an established form of passing across messages in our present society. As a matter of routine, television is a source of information and entertainment for viewers in their homes or wherever they gather to watch its flickering images. The information that it purveys may stimulate voters into more active political participation or apathy during elections. Television broadcasting houses package political information on elections as commentaries, editorials, news stories and media events. Television is a key factor in the electoral process because it links those seeking public offices to the voters. Importantly, the same message on television can reach millions of voters watching at the same time. It is therefore not unexpected that politicians, their political parties and their media strategists have vigorously employed it to pass across various pieces of information to the public in the hope of swaying them to favour their own purposes.

There has been a growing apathy of voters towards participation in elections. Most do not see any reason to bother to register in order to vote. Another group willing to register feel that they are entirely disenfranchised by the absence or little number of registration centres. Some scale the hurdles of registration and actually vote, but, feel that their votes do not count as they believe that sharp practices are used to install undesired candidates into public offices. Many Nigerians still refer to the 1992 Abiola-Tofar presidential contest that was widely acclaimed as the freest election in the country. Unfortunately, the result of the election was annulled by the then military government of President Ibrahim Babaginda. Of course this sparked off violent riots and protests in many parts of the country, particularly in the South Western states.

The disinterest of citizens in political participation has been a major issue of concern to contestants, their supporters, the government and civil societies. The low participation of voters in any election is indeed worrisome, as brilliant leaders may not emerge from the elections. Poor leadership may cause inefficient management of public resources and public expression of anger. The problem now lies in fuelling the voters to participate to elect credible leaders of their choice[s]. The messages sent to the voters through the mass media may induce their interests in participation. Television's simultaneous broadcast of sound and pictures has a luring effect of drawing its viewers to be part of the exciting actions it is relaying. Television broadcasts also inspire audiences to want to become part of the stories.

Residents in Ota are exposed to television broadcasts from twelve television stations: Gateway Television; Africa Independent Television (AIT); Channels; Galaxy; Silverbird; Muri Television (MITV); Degue Broadcasting Network (DBN);

Lagos State Television/Lagos Weekend; Nigerian Television Authority (NTA), Tejuosho and Victoria Island. It is against this background that this study seeks to find out if the various pieces of information that television broadcasts from these stations provided did encourage residents in Ado Odo/Ota to participate in the 2007 Nigerian presidential election.

Statement of the Problem

Citizen participation in elections may be influenced by the quality of information available to them. Political socialization and communication are avenues of sharing some political information. We are living in a media world: a world saturated by the mass media. Citizens are literarily immersed in a sea of information concerning the various contestants, the voting procedures, the actual dates for voting and allied messages. Citizens can get information on elections from the newspapers, magazines, radio, the Internet and television. Each medium has its own peculiar characteristics and advantages. Media reports lead to public talks and actions and decisions on who to vote or not to vote for. This confirms Shields, Goidel and Tadlock's (1995, pp. 415-430) opinion that mass media contents affect voting decisions.

Television is a mass media channel. However, it can direct public attention to particular issues because of the pictures it paints. According to Antonoff (2007), "television is the most widespread form of communication in the world. Though most people will never meet the leader of a country, travel to the moon, or participate in a war, they can observe these experiences through the images on their television." Bittner (1989, pp. 258) remarks that television is popular because it combines sight and sound. He adds that many people spend more time watching television than they spend on other mass media channels.

Some people turn to watch television to get more information on the electoral processes and on those contesting for public offices. Television political communication should make political participation more effective by giving Nigerians enough information to make them eager to go to the polls. Voters' participation or apathy has arisen from information shared during electioneering times on television programmes. Thus, television messages can affect behaviour either positively or negatively. The positive outcome is to encourage voters' participation. The contrary outcome is to deepen citizens' apathy. Television broadcasts literally influence the pictures in the minds of the voting public. Civic vitality is a necessity in democracy. Campbell (n.d) writes that the most commonly accepted indicator of public participation in an election is their turning out to vote. Citizens who have legal rights to vote are expected to actively participate in one or more of the following: finding out more about

contestants and the political parties; joining political parties; campaigning for the contestants; cajoling others to follow their examples; registering to vote and actually voting on the Election Day. These different levels of participation are enhanced or hindered by the types of messages that the voters receive. Television broadcasts are means of sending different types of messages to members of the electorate. Indecisive floaters and crossover voters may influence election results if they decide to be active participants in the very late hours of campaigning; and if their numbers are substantially outstanding.

The problem for investigation is to find out if these messages carried by television led to increase in voters' participation in the 2007 Nigerian presidential election [among the voters] in Ado-Odo/Ota Local Government Area of Ogun State.

Objectives of the Study

This study seeks to investigate the role television broadcasts play in increasing voters' participation in the overt electoral processes. Thus, it seeks to determine whether television broadcasts can increase participation in presidential elections by:

i Stimulating their interest to seek more information on this election, the candidates and their parties;
ii Influencing the involvement of the voters in the election by making them voluntarily join campaign teams;
iii Encouraging the voters' decision to participate more in the election by joining political parties or getting others to join the parties;
iv Increasing the number of topics for discussion on the presidential election between the voters and the people who are significant in their lives.

Research Questions

1. Did television broadcasts stimulate voters' interest to seek more information on the 2007 presidential election, the candidates and their parties?
2. Did television broadcasts influence voters involvement in the election by making them voluntarily join campaign teams?
3. Did television broadcasts encourage voters to join political parties or get others to join the parties?
4. Did television broadcasts increase the number of topics for discussion on the presidential election between the voters and the people who are significant in their lives?

Literature Review

Participation in Democracy: In a functional democracy, the citizens take part in deciding who leads the government by electing some candidates into offices. Democracy is a government system that allows for mass participation and competitive elections. It also recognizes both human and civil rights. Arblaster (2002, p. 9) defines democracy as "the idea of popular power, of a situation in which power, and perhaps authority is usually thought of as being political, and it often therefore takes the form of an idea of popular sovereignty - the people as the ultimate political authority". In representative democracy, the citizens do not rule directly but through their elected and accountable representatives that they have voted from among other contenders because it is not possible for every citizen to participate in governance. Appadorai (1975, p. 13) states that democracy is a system of government that allows the people to exercise governing power either directly or through representatives that they elect periodically.

Christiano (2002, p. 31) writes that democracy implies commitment to equality in voting power and opportunities to participate in discussions. He adds that it gives individuals equal abilities to press forward their own concerns when decisions concerning the terms of association are made because every person has the same equally weighted vote that decides the outcome of elections.

The vote is the foundation of political equality and participation. In participating, ordinary members in a political system attempt to influence others. Berman and Murphy (1996, p. 369) add that voting in an election is the most important political decision that decides who rules. Voting is a crucial political behaviour. Ethrigde and Handelamn (2008, p. 88) draw our attention to the core value in voting. According to them, "the act of voting occupies a central place in political behaviour. Elections are a direct and generally accepted approach to popular consultation and are a basic component of democratic government. By selecting one candidate or party over another, citizens express preferences regarding who should govern and which government policies should be adopted or changed".

Dowse and Hughes (1983, p. 322) define the election as a procedure recognized by the rule of an organization, be it a state, club, voluntary organization or whatever, where all, or some, of the members choose a smaller number of persons from among them to hold an office or offices of authority within that organization. Powell (2000) therefore states that the mainstay of democracy is competitive elections taking place at regular intervals. According to him, citizens engage in elections for seven reasons: as a means of holding politicians accountable, expressing discontent, pointing the route they want

policies to take, placing issues on the public agenda, occasioning public debates and choosing delegates or trustees. Powell describes elections as instruments of democracy.

To what extent does television influence the people to participate in elections? The power of television lies in its visual capabilities. Good pictures catch the eyes' attention. Bittner (1989, p. 258) writes that television's enormous credibility can be attributed to two factors: its tremendous impact on our lives and its power of sight and sound. The ubiquity and centrality of television in our everyday lives cannot be denied. Television is part of the popular culture. Gerbner and Gross (1976, pp. 172-194) declare television as the dominant force shaping modern society through the symbolic content of real-life drama shown 'hour after hour, week after week'. They ascribe to television the role of being society's institutional storyteller acquainting us with a "coherent picture of what exists, what is important, what is related to what and what is right." Their comment assume deeper meaning when placed alongside Newcomb's (1974) remark that television keeps people at home and offer friends and family members the opportunity to share and deliberate what they have just watched. Lazarsfeld and Merton (1948, pp. 95-118) accuse television of causing the narcotizing dysfunction in the society. They explain that television presents the society with its challenges and a false sense of involvement and participation.

Verba and Nie (1972, pp. 118-119) identify seven levels of political participation among voters. They categorized voters into: the unclassifieds, inactives, voting specialists, parochials, communalists, campaigners and the complete activists. The unclassifieds are not known. The inactives are not politically active. The voting specialists vote but do not get involved in other activities. The parochials contact officials concerning their individual problems. The communalists work in voluntary groups, contact party officials on a variety of issues but avoid campaign work. The campaigners work actively in political campaigns and vote in elections. The complete activists are fully involved in all aspects of political life. Milbrath (1982) collapse these into four broad categories: the apathetic, the spectators, the transitionals and gladiators. He explains that the apathetic are non-voters and avoid all involvement in politics. The spectators may wear party buttons, put stickers on their cars and try persuading others to vote in a prescribed way. The transitionals attend political meetings, make financial contributions and even contact public or political leaders. The gladiators run for offices, hold public and political offices, solicit for funds for the parties, attend caucus meetings and are active in political campaigns. Milbrath classifies the apathetics and the spectators as inactives while the transitionals and gladiators are actives. He adds that most citizens are inactives.

Much as voting is seen as essential in democracy, Ross (1996, p. 11) believes it is one of the least tasking forms of political participation. Piven and Cloward (1988), and Wolfinger and Rosenstone (1980) emphasize that the right to choose not to vote is also essential for a successful democracy. Berman and Murphy (1996, p. 374) point out that some people do not vote because they are satisfied with the ways things are and therefore see no particular reason to become politically involved; feel that their votes do not count; the voting process is difficult; or that the parties are not differentiated. Ross (1996, p. 13) enumerates additional reasons to include lack of interest in both politics and in the elections; lack of time, non-registration; voters travelling at the time of the elections and hindering medical problems. Schattschneider (1960) writes that those who have no stake in public business do not consider it necessary to participate in political activities. Avery (1988, p. 125) quips "if you don't benefit, you drop out!" Absenting from voting may be harmful to the society irrespective of the reasons for doing so. This explains Mencken and Nathan's (1920) famous statement that "bad officials are elected by good citizens who do not vote".

Berman and Murphy (1996, p. 366) claim that the core of participation is the vote. They suggest that if all citizens easily register to vote and then actually vote, then the candidates they vote for will be representative of the population. They further add that democratic involvement through voting and other acts of participation usually results in political stability because the citizens show greater levels of contentment in the political system. Almond and Verba (1963, p. 8) find that a civic culture is crucial for the stability of modern democracy in England, Germany, Italy, Mexico, and the United States. This culture is a "culture based on communication and persuasion, a culture of consensus and diversity, a culture that permitted change but moderated it". They say that there is a correlation between political competence and civic participation and the effectiveness and legitimacy of a political system (p. 230).

Television and Political Participation: Watching television is part of the popular culture. In a democratic and pluralistic setting, voters watch television to source for news and information on the government and elections. Beck, Dalton, Greene and Huckfeldt (2002, pp. 57-73) and Chaffe, Zhao and Leshner (1994, pp. 305-324) also remark that mass media channels including television, are the principal sources of information on modern campaigns. Voters must have accurate and timely information to make informed decisions.

Lang and Lang (1959, p. 226) find that news media influence extends far beyond political campaigns. According to them:

> all news that bears on political activity and beliefs-and not only

> campaign speeches and campaign propaganda-is somehow relevant to the vote. Not only during the campaign, but also in the periods between. The mass media provide perspectives, shape images of candidates and parties, help highlight issues around which a campaign will develop, and define the unique atmosphere and areas of sensitivity, which mark any particular campaign

Television as an audiovisual mass channel has been vigourously employed in elections. It brings into millions of homes what is happening on the political front, especially the campaigns. As Dye, Zeigler and Lichter (1992, p. 4) observe, television is essential in present day elections and is "our most significant form of mass communicating - that is communication that reaches nearly everyone: the poor, the illiterates, the aged, the sick, children...". According to them, television has replaced the political parties as the main link between the candidates and the voters. The candidates can bypass the parties and appeal directly to the voters. Those that appear on television are perceived as more serious (p. 125). Ross (1996, p. 324) remarks that television is the most cost-effective way to reach the public as messages can be tailor-made to reach specific voters.

Cohen and Nice (2003, p. 80) are of the opinion that television gives the political candidates more opportunities to communicate with the public directly rather than passing through party organizations. Therefore, media intrusion theorists like Davis (1990) claim that the media, especially television, have intruded into politics and undermined political party control over elections. Patterson (1980) argues that television has replaced the political parties in the election processes as the candidates use television to promote their own interests and not the interests of their parties.

Hellweg, Pfau and Brydon (1992, pp. 80-82,109), Keeter (1987, pp. 344-358) and Lang and Lang (1968) lament that the rise of television has introduced a more image-based political setting that lays emphasis on a candidate's personal qualities. As Graber (1990, p. 138) explains, "people draw a multitude of inferences from human physical appearance and movements . . . . Many people infer personality characteristics from human physical features."

Ansolabehere and Iyenger (1995) claim that the battleground of the modern campaign is the mass media, particularly televised advertising because it enables candidates to communicate directly and on their own terms to the voters. This supports Forrest and Marks (1999, pp. 99-114) remarks that contemporary election campaigns are progressively more dominated by national television, radio and press coverage with the attendant financial resources required by

political parties to run such campaigns considerable and escalating. According to Woll and Binstock (1991, pp. 475- 478) the most important impact of television in presidential politics is perhaps the expansion of the coverage of the horse race and of the personalities of the candidates particularly during the primaries. Television has brought more exposure that is public and made the candidates and their styles of overriding importance. This makes it more difficult for them and their advisers to manipulate the public than they could have done with other media that gives them less exposure.

Why is there so much interest in using television during elections? Baran (2004, p. 450) responds that it is because television is the primary source of public affairs information. Roskin, Cord, Medeiros and Jones (2003, p. 154) add three more reasons. Their first reason is that television has touched and changed politics. Their second reason is that television has the strongest persuasive power because it mimics face-to-face communication. Their third reason is that television has eroded the roles of opinion leaders. According to them, the television newscasters have now become the opinion leaders. However, they qualify that television's impact is partly still dependent on the discussions the viewers have with their families and friends after watching its programmes. Gerbner (1990, p. 261) confirms that television gives us much of what we think about, know or do in common.

Just, Crigler and Alger (1996, p. 233) say that citizens are much more likely to make their assessments of political candidates based on the personal attributes of these politicians rather than on their political affiliations. The inference from this observation is that television can affect the decision of the viewer on who to vote for based on what he has seen. Druckman (2003, pp. 559-571) discovers that television images matter in politics because they significantly affect overall debate evaluations, prime people to rely more on personality perceptions in their own evaluations of the candidates, enhance what people learn and may have indeed played an important role in the first Kennedy-televised Nixon debate. Druckman (2003, p. 560) concludes that television substantially shapes political attitudes and learning, with the implication being that television viewers have access to visual imagery and nonverbal cues that often play important roles in shaping peoples' assessment of others. These authors note that voters may ignore their political affiliations.

Gould (1998), Holmes and Holmes (1998) and Finkelstein (1998) explain why politicians, their advisers and professional pollsters continue to use television. They note that even at the last minute, a good election campaign message can cause a vital shift in the voting convictions and consequently change the beliefs of at least the wavering voters who have not firmly decided on who to vote for.

MacKuen (1984, p. 374) explains that television's pictures may cause evaluative effects in those individuals who have low levels of previous political information and awareness. However, those with higher levels of prior interest will still watch television's images and remain unaffected, because the screen pictures do not adequately upset their more refined evaluations.

Roskin, Cord, Medeiros and Jones (2003, pp. 161-162) write that television has changed politics in three different ways through nomination of candidates based on the bandwagon effect, turning itself into a kingmaker and making politicians to schedule and strategize as to how to capture television attention. They add that the bandwagon effect enhances recognition and generates subsequent television coverage.

But has television's entrance into politics weakened or increased the citizen's participation in election? Roskin, Cord, Medeiros and Jones (2003, p. 163) seem to agree with the explanation that television creates apathy and passivity, which in turn lower Election Day turnouts. They observe that television saturates the viewers, in advance, with the frequent coverage of the candidates that the voters lose interest in voting. Baran and Davis (2003, p. 339) have the same opinion about television creating voters' apathy because many people stay inside their homes to watch what is happening rather than in participating.

Television tells the viewers who the candidates are. Scholars like Atkin and Heald (1976, pp. 216-228) and Brians and Wattenberg (1996, pp. 172-193) find that television commercials increase reported turnout propensities, enhance viewers' knowledge of the candidates, and reinforce citizens' underlying partisan predispositions. As Lowden, Andersen, Dozier and Lauzen (1994, pp. 293-304) comment, the voters who focus on candidates' images consult television broadcasts while those more interested in issues examine the newspapers.

Theoretical Framework

The agenda-setting theory came out of the popular Chapel Hill Study of McCombs and Shaw (1972, p. 177). They were able to establish that the mass media influence the audiences. They measured newspapers, magazines and television newscasts during the United States of America 1968 Presidential election. The media agenda or what the media thought were important was determined by the prominence of the news stories of the moment- their length and position. The public agenda, the focus of public attention or what the public thought, discussed or worried about as important were determined by asking 100 undecided Chapel Hill voters exposed to a mix of newspapers, network television news, and news magazines to outline what each thought were the key issues of the campaigns, irrespective of what the political candidates were saying.

They discovered that the media appeared to exert considerable impact on voters' judgement of what they considered the major issues of the presidential campaign. In fact, there was a correlation of + .967 between the major issues emphasized during the campaigns and the voters' independent judgements of what they thought were important!

Griffin (2003, p. 392) listed the media agenda in order of importance as foreign policy, law and order, fiscal policy, public welfare and civil rights. The public agenda list was nearly identical. McCombs and Shaw found an almost perfect correlation of .97 between the media agenda and the public agenda. They tagged this occurrence agenda setting, observing that "the mass media set the agenda for each political campaign by influencing the salience or of attitudes toward the political issues". McCombs and Shaw (1974) define agenda setting as the impact the mass media have in shaping cognitive changes in individuals by structuring their worlds. Indeed, what the public considered to be the most important issues of the day were being shaped by the mass media! However, they regard this as normal and inevitable in the flow of news. This makes McCombs and Shaw (1974) to assert that there is a positive relationship between what the media emphasize by the coverage given and what voters see as important.

Numerous studies like this have established the firm correlations between the media and the public priorities. Such studies include Dearing and Rogers (1996), Ghanem (1996), McCombs and Shaw (1993, pp. 58-67) and Weaver, Graber, McCombs and Eyal (1981). As Newbold, (1995, p. 121) correlates, the salience of an issue in the agenda will also be seen by the audience to be very important. Rogers and Dearing (1994, p. 91) equally stress that the media agenda have strong influence on top decision makers. Nonetheless, Walker (1977, pp. 423-445) and Wood and Peake (1998, pp. 173-183) assert that except for some uncommon and non-routine crisis situations, the media's political agenda setting impact is limited.

In the light of classic agenda-setting studies, campaign scholars like Brandenburg (2002, pp. 34-54), Brandenburg (2004); Norris, Curtice, Sanders, Scammell, and Semetko (1999); Roberts and McCombs (1994, pp. 249-262); Semetko, Blumler, Gurevitch and Weaver (1991) and Van Aelst, (2004) started focusing attention on the relationship between the media and the political agenda to determine the extent media and political parties interact during the campaign and to answer the question of who sets the agenda: the political parties or the media.

The agenda setting researchers believe that the media do not only tell the people what to do, but can and do tell people what to think about through the coverage the media give or refuse to give to events. McCombs (1994, p. 4) say

this is possible because the mass media have the ability to transfer the salience of items on their news agenda to the public agenda. The media do this by assigning specific attributes to the potential objects of interests in the issues, events or persons. This means that if the media assign, ascribe or credit somebody or something with some qualities the media consumers equally credit that person or something as the media have so done. This explains why McCombs and Shaw (1974) remark that "we judge as important what the media judge as important". Thus, Cobb and Elder (1971, p. 909) comment that "the media can also play a very important role in elevating issues to the systemic agenda and increasing their chances of receiving consideration on institutional agendas."

Methodology

The Research Design: The survey research design was used for this study to aggregate the views of the large human samples used. The survey design made it possible to study the samples and variables as they were, without giving the researcher any room to control or manipulate them. This method helped to determine the relationship between the various variables studied.

Study Population: The study population were the registered voters in the 2007 Nigerian General Elections living in Ado-Odo/Ota Local Government. This community was deliberately chosen because it combines the qualities of both urban and rural communities. It houses a large collection of the major tribes in Nigeria. However, there is a predominance of the Yorubas. Residents in this council can watch the programmes of the twelve television stations from the nearby cosmopolitan Lagos and all the stations in Ogun State. Ado-Odo/Ota is divided into two constituencies: Constituencies I and II. Each has eight wards or Registration Areas. This study examined the two. There were 187,391 registered voters in these constituencies (Source: Independent National Electoral Commission, Ado-Odo/Ota Local Government, Ota). Copies of the questionnaire were administered to 5% of these voters totalling 3,635 respondents. The respondents were picked from the individual households. 3,064 copies of the questionnaire were returned indicating an 84.29% return rate.

Sample Frame: The sampling frame is a register of all the groups under study. The sample frame for this study is the list of the polling stations from the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). Each Constituency has some polling stations listed under it. There were 277 polling stations in both constituencies.

Sampling Procedure and Sample Size: The random probability sampling technique was used to select the individual respondents and to guarantee each member of the population an equal and independent chance of being chosen. This means that the resultant sample is a close depiction of the residents of Ado-Odo/Ota. The individual respondents were randomly picked from Constituencies I and II.

The sampling was done in different stages. The voters were already banded into different clusters or wards based on the physical location of their wards. There were 16 of such wards or clusters. Three wards were picked from each constituency. The systematic sampling method was used to select the three wards to be sampled.

Step 1: Numbering the wards up to 16.

Step 2: Finding the sampling interval

This is the standard distance between the selected elements.

$$\frac{Population size}{Selected number of wards}$$

$$\frac{16}{6}$$

$$= 2.66$$

$$\approx 3$$

This meant that every 3rd ward from the first one was picked. The first ward, Ota 1 was selected as the starting point. The wards picked for Constituency 1 were Ota 1, Sango and Iju. For Constituency II, Ado-Odo II, Ketu/Adie-Owe and Agbara II were chosen.

Data Presentation: The percentages of respondents that agreed that television broadcasts made them to participate more in the presidential election are as shown below:

Table 1: Data on political participation

Variables	%
Stimulating respondents' interest to find out more about political parties	64.2
Stimulating respondents' interest to find out more about contestants	65.5
Increasing level of political involvement	51.1
Respondents voluntarily joining political campaign teams	33.1
Respondents voluntarily joining political parties	33.3

Respondents voluntarily getting others to join political parties	35.6
Raising topics for discussion	61.5
	n= 3064

Television broadcasts made voters in Ado-Odo/Ota to be more curious about the contestants and their political parties. This simply means that it is a wise thing for their media relations managers and strategists to give out more good information about the contestants they are fielding in electoral contests and their political parties' affiliation to television broadcast houses and other mass media channels not only for the electorate to be more knowledgeable about them but also to secure their votes and loyalties. The need for this is more pressing when it is realized that more than half of the respondents increased their level of political participation because of what they saw on television. This means that the government, NGOs and political parties can actually use television broadcasts to mobilize voters to come out and exercise their civic rights. Some respondents went some steps further to join political parties, campaign teams and getting others to join the parties too. Importantly, we know that our close family members and friends influence some of our decisions. Television broadcasts raised topics for discussion between respondents and others who are significant in their lives. It is possible these discussions catalysed them into more political participation.

From the above it is obvious that television broadcasts to the voters made them to increase their level of political participation during the 2007 Nigerian presidential election, for example, by going to register and actually going to vote on Election Day.

Data Analysis: When these variables were subjected to the Pearson Bivariate Two-Tailed Correlation tests, there were found positive and significant relationships between the respondents' exposure to television broadcasts and increases in their political participation.

There was a .562+ correlation between television broadcasts making respondents to voluntarily join political campaign teams and the same broadcasts making these respondents to voluntarily get others to join political parties. Similarly, there is a .526+ correlation between television broadcasts stimulating respondents to find out more about the political parties and respondents wanting to find out more about the presidential contestants. Television broadcasts encouraged voters to participate in the political process by seeking more

knowledge about the political parties and their candidates. If these were voters who had not decided on whom to give their votes, carefully packaged information can sway or push them away from specific contestants and their political parties.

Equally, there was a .521+ positive relationship between television broadcasts making respondents to voluntarily join political campaign teams and the same broadcasts turning these respondents to voluntarily join political parties. In a similar fashion, a .515+ significant and positive relationship exists between television broadcasts making respondents to voluntarily join political parties and these broadcasts in turn making these respondents to voluntarily get others to join political parties. We therefore conclude that the voters' exposure to television broadcasts made them to participate more in the presidential election.

Answering the Research Questions

Research Question 1: Did television broadcasts stimulate voters' interest to seek more information on this election, the candidates and their parties?

From Table 1 above, it can be drawn that the exposure of residents of Ado Odo/Ota to television broadcasts stimulated their interests to seek out more information on this presidential election by searching out for more information on the contestants and their fielding political parties. Almost two-thirds of the voters did these. This is not surprising as some of the contestants and their political platforms were new faces on the political terrain. In this election, there were twenty five political parties fielding the same number of candidates, with some of the contestants running for presidential elections for the first time. Television broadcasts stirred these respondents into finding out more about the political parties and about the presidential contestants.

Research Question 2: Did television broadcasts influence voters involvement in the election by making them voluntarily join campaign teams?

It can be concluded from Table 1 above that exposure to television broadcasts made some of these voters to voluntarily join campaign teams. Campaign teams engage in series of activities all aimed at promoting their candidates to win the election by getting out the voters. However, it can be seen that television's influence is not as enormous as in making the residents scour for more information about the contestants and the political parties.

Research Question 3: Did television broadcasts encourage voters' to participate more in the elections by joining political parties or getting others to join the parties?

From Table 1, it has been established that about one third of the voters engaged in more political participation by not only joining political parties but also by getting others to join these parties too. Membership in a political party evidences an act of positive identification and participation. Getting others to join the same party is a further confirmation of involvement. These pre-election activities are pointers to the fact that the voters decided to get more involved in political participation before the presidential Election Day.

Research Question 4: Did television broadcasts increase the number of topics for discussion on the presidential election between the voters and the people who are significant in their lives?

Politics and elections are usually leading topics in discussions, especially in an election year. From the table above, it is glaring that what television showed increased the number of issues on the discussion tables of the voters and those that they regard as important or significant in their lives. Part of the discussions may have included extended exchange of views on who to vote for or restrain from voting for; joining the campaign trail and even getting others to follow suit.

Summary

It has been established that there are positive and significant correlations among all the variables that tested voters' exposure to television and amplification of their political participation in the last presidential election. Television broadcasts specifically made voters to take certain actions like going to the registering centres to register as voters and then going to the polling centres to vote. They also improved their knowledge about the political parties and the various presidential contestants; joined and got others to join in political parties and helped out in campaign teams. It is certain that what voters saw on television directly influenced them to be more involved in political participation. The relatively high correlation figures 0.526 - 0.515 shows the various ways television broadcasts prompted the voters into more active participation. It is hereby concluded that television broadcasts made the voters in Ado-Odo/Ota Local Government Area to participate more actively in the last Nigerian presidential election. These television broadcasts - news, commentaries, spots, advertorials and other types of coverage - jolted the voters on the need to be more active in their political involvement.

Conclusion

Members of the studied population had access to television broadcasts. These broadcasts not only gingered them into getting more involved in political

participation in the 2007 Nigerian presidential election but to get others involved too. Participation destroys voters' apathy and builds up democracy. This active participation of the citizenry should be encouraged as it leads to the election of a more robust government where literary everybody makes a contribution to national development. Thus television content producers should be encouraged to do more.

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