

EFFECT OF ELECTRONIC MEDIA ON THE VOTING BEHAVIOUR OF IMO STATE ELECTORATE IN THE 2023 GENERAL ELECTIONS

by

¹Edem, Kuboro Donatus

²Igbozuruike, Chigozie Jude (Ph.D)

³Ibe, Kingsley (Ph.D)

Department of Mass Communication

Federal Polytechnic Nekede, Owerri, Imo State, Nigeria

Abstract

The study seeks to examine the influence of political messages on selected electronic media platforms on electorates voting behaviour during the 2023 general elections. The objectives are to examine the extent to which the Imo electorate was exposed to political campaigns on radio and television during the 2023 elections, know the voters' perceptions of political campaigns on radio and television during the 2023 election and find out if political campaigns on radio and television influence the Imo electorate to vote for the candidates of their choice. The study was anchored on Sherrif et al (1961), social judgment theory. The survey design was adopted for this study due to the nature of the study. It focused on a representative sample derived from the entire population of a study. The survey design was adopted to study 385 eligible voters from selected LGAs in Imo State. The study found that various political parties extensively deployed campaigns on radio and television during the elections but the electronic media campaigns were not well received by all the electorate except based on party affiliation [χ^2 (df, 8) = 253.248, $p < .0005$]; and those campaigns on radio and television did not holistically influence electoral decisions even when they might be appealing enough to do so. It was recommended that political parties and politicians should use other media to complement radio or television in their campaigns since they do not have a wholesale effect on voter behaviour.

Keywords: Electronic Media, Voter behavior, Electorate & Election

Introduction

The importance of communication in politics cannot be overemphasized. Akakwandu (2016) avers that communication is the hub around which politics rotates. It is the vehicle that transports political messages and a body that animates politics. It is evident that

political communication is persuasively packaged to achieve some ends. Governments use it to win support for their programmes, policies and actions; the governed use it to call the government's attention to their plights and needs; politicians use it principally to influence voters' behaviour in their favour. Political

communication across the globe has continued to evolve using a variety of channels, including mass media, social media, interpersonal communication, and public speaking (Ejem & Nwokeocha, 2023).

The mass media, on their part, are the established vehicles of communication. They range from the broadcast (radio and television), the print (newspaper, magazine), the internet, and transit to outdoor media (pamphlets, handbills, billboards, posters, etc.) (Ejem & Fab-Ukozor, 2016). These media, it must be noted, when used in politics are to market or create awareness about a political party, political candidate or political manifestoes cum ideology to the general public. The media have been identified in bodies of political literature as veritable instruments of political change (Ben-Enukora et al., 2023a), because they aid in the diffusion of political knowledge, thoughts, and public opinion (Ben-Enukora et al., 2023b). In other words, politics takes a humanitarian posture in the presence of the media and without politics, media practice would have no essence, hence, both media and politics enjoy some form of symbiosis (Wilson, 2009). The media of mass communication always rise to the occasion when political actors throw their hats into the rings. The media then do society a duty of care by scrutinizing the candidates and bringing them to the public domain. Their lives, both past and present are discussed openly in the media to aid public acceptance and endorsement in open contest.

Also, to achieve political support, political parties and their candidates engage in extensive politico-media campaigns to win acceptance in the public sphere. In Nigeria, research has shown that since the dawn of democratic governance, the majority of individuals who ascend to power, are those who have earned media support. The choice of voters in a political

democracy is sometimes always controlled by media influence. During the electioneering period, political parties and candidates always struggle for greater media presence. Ahmad et al. (2019), note that one of such categories of the media that largely gain the patronage of politics is the electronic media – namely, television and radio. Electronic media serve as media for entertainment, information, and education and it is equally of great importance to advertising (Anyanwu et al., 2015). Faces of candidates seeking political offices are brought to viewers and listeners to help them decide whether or not such candidates should be trusted. Electronic media is a powerful medium that aids in the diffusion of political thoughts, ideas, and knowledge among people in different societies.

In the face of the rise in relevance of other media of communication that seems to challenge the relevance and power of the electronic media in political campaigns and activities, the study seeks to examine the place of electronic media in electorates' choice of candidates, using eligible voters in Imo State, the 2023 elections and campaigns on IBC (State broadcaster), HotFM (one of the leading radio stations in Imo State), Channels TV (one of the leading TV stations in Nigeria) and NTA 12 (Iwuji et al., 2023) as reference points.

The Research Problem

All the candidates and their parties massively deploy the use of electronic channels to propagate their intentions and manifestoes to the voters and try to curry their votes. However, in the face of intervening variables such as the rise in social media political consciousness (Ejem & Nwokeocha, 2023; Akerele-Popoola et al., 2023) and the sophistication of the electorate or audience (Ejem et al., 2023), it is not clear whether the message in

electronic channels makes the electorate vote for the candidates. Even if they do, it also boggles the mind whether the electronic channels have an effect on voters' behaviour that is commensurate to the hundreds of millions spent on them. It is uncertain whether a significant number of the voters actively paid attention to the messages. Though it is obvious that these messages are regularly played on TV or radio during campaigns, for the electorate to see or hear and appreciate the messages they embodied, what is not clear is the electorate's level or extent of exposure to the messages, and whether they influence them in deciding elections.

Research Questions

1. To what extent was the Imo electorate exposed to political campaigns on radio and television during the 2023 elections?
2. What were the voters' perceptions of political campaigns on radio and television during the 2023 election?
3. Did the political campaigns on radio and television during the 2023 elections influence the Imo electorate to vote for the candidates of their choice?

Hypotheses:

- H0₁: The electorate's level of exposure to campaigns on electronic media is not associated with their choice of candidates during the 2023 election.
- H0₂: The electorate's political party affiliation is not associated with their perception of the political campaign on electronic media during the election.

Literature Review

Political Advertising using the Mass Media in Nigeria

Political advertising is an essential feature of democracy as it allows candidates and parties to sell manifestoes and political agendas to the electorate. These are communications geared towards persuading people and groups by an identified sponsor, political party and their third parties to take favourable actions to win the voters' support (Olalekan & Sam, 2018). This implies that the target of political advertisement is usually voters who must be swayed or influenced through political messages well packaged and delivered by politicians using the mass media and other relevant channels. It is the marketing of the political party ideas and that of candidates, to reach and influence voters.

Political reporting and advertisements in the media have become so critical in Nigerian politics so much that electorate and residents generally most times weigh the seriousness of candidates and their political parties against the background and level and pattern of political advertising deployed by them (Tujumaiye, Simon & Obia, 2018). As a unique genre of advertising, political advertising encompasses all efforts made by politicians, political parties, and candidates to plan, design and disseminate messages intended to encourage favourable attitudes among the electorates which would, in turn, make them exercise their franchise in favour of the parties and their candidates (Tejumaiye et al, 2018).

This entails that political advertising is not just bumped into and it is not an accident but well-planned and discreetly executed efforts by politicians to inform, (and sometimes, misinform) and persuade the electorate to support and/or vote for them to legitimately acquire power in a

democracy. In Nigeria, political advertising has been gaining serious momentum since the return of civilian rule in 1999, with every election, there has been an exponential increase in the use of political advertising.

Asemah (2010), cited in Edegoh et al (2013), explains that political advertising is used by Nigerian politicians to persuade people to vote for them and it is consequently an essential constituent or part of the political process in Nigeria just like any other democratic society.

In as much as advertising concerns creating awareness about products or services to potential consumers who may need such services or products, political advertising has to do with creating awareness about a political party or political candidate to the electorate to seek support (for such political party or candidate) during elections. It has to do with the social marketing of a political parties manifestoes, candidate, or ideology before the electorate whose votes are highly solicited to make sure the political party or the candidate wins or occupies the public office vied for.

According to Ubokudom (2008), political advertising has become “a powerful marketing force helping political party aspirants to communicate through the media, their diverse visions, aspirations and objectives to the masses with the hope of securing acceptance and subsequent votes to enable them access their desired political office”. Political advertising as a means of mass communication has therefore made the propagation of political candidates, ideas and goals possible and comprehensive. As a means of forceful communication, political advertising enables political candidates to convey their positions on important issues that affect the electorate and acquaint voters with their accomplishments and personalities (Ubokudom, 2008, p.17).

The above-quoted suggestions imply that for a successful election to take place, the political candidates must ensure that their images as well as their aspirations are well-packaged and disseminated through the appropriate media. Additionally, political advertising should aim at providing appropriate information that is aimed at uniting the nation, exhibiting a spirit of patriotism to gain approval and subsequent votes from the electorate. For Olujide, Adeyemi, and Gbadeyan (2010, p.53) "political advertising is the use of media by political candidates to increase their exposure to the public". According to them, "the extensive use of television and radio has supplanted direct appearances on the campaign trail which was popularly used by politicians in the past five decades. Spot advert is the most commonly used technique and it attempts to create a favourable image of the candidate and a negative image of the opponent". Furthermore, in political advertising, the act of persuasion is effectively enhanced through the use of mass communication which acts as a channel of distribution for the manufacturers to get their messages across to a large audience.

Voter Behaviour

Voting behaviour entails the way the electorate tends to vote. Voting behaviour could be seen as actions or inactions of the electorate towards participating in elections. Political psychologists probe and attempt to explain why certain people vote for different political parties and candidates (Ejem & Fab-Ukozor, 2016)). This aids politicians and political parties to predict who might vote for them during the election. There are a lot of factors that may influence or shape political behaviour. These factors or influences could be long-term – religion, race, age, social class, gender, education, etc. or short-term – performance of the ruling party, electoral campaign or political advertising, the

image of the party leaders, the influence of social media, mass media influence, major issues, major political events, etc.

Political advertiser's greatest tasks have always been trying to understand what element in their political advertising campaign compels the electorate to react to advertisements the way they do. "This involves the study of the mental, emotional processes and the physical activities of people who purchase and use goods and services to satisfy particular needs and wants (Arens, 2004)". Consequently, most potential voters desire to have a representative that is familiar with the needs of the voters and exudes to some extent promising attributes that are susceptible to convincing the electorate to accept his mandate. Shimp (2000), added that the consumer who in this context is the electorate is constantly being bombarded with information that is potentially relevant for making decisions. The consumers' reaction to such information, how the information is being interpreted and how it is combined or integrated with other information may have a crucial impact on choice. This, therefore, requires the advertiser to have sufficient information about the consumer to package the product in a manner that will attract and compel the consumer to purchase it.

Evidence in the literature shows that voter behaviour can be influenced by political communication, but a significant area of emphasis is how the consumers (voters) attend to these messages (Akerele-Popoola et al., 2023). Shimp (2000), upholds that, consumers process information in eight (8) interrelated stages namely: exposure to information; selective attention; comprehension of attended information; agreement with comprehension information; retrieval of information, decision-making from alternatives, and action was taken on basis of the decision.

Factors mediating political advertising and voter's decision

What is it in political advertising that makes it tend to influence voter behaviour or the decision of voters in the electoral process? The process of voting for a choice political candidate involves human behaviour which could be grouped into three major categories namely: cognition; learning and motivation (Belch & Belch, 2001). The first task in advertising any new product (fresh political candidate) is to create awareness (cognition) that the product (candidate) exists (Pitta & Katsanis, 1995). The advertisers must make the consumers (electorate) perceive that there is such a product (candidate). The second stage is for the advertisers to provide every information about the product which implies learning by the consumer. Learning brings about a behaviour change that occurs through time as a result of external stimulus conditioning. Providing complete and accurate information about the product aids prospective consumers in making informed decisions (Belch & Belch, 2001). Lastly, the advertisers motivate by being persuasive words. According to Esuh (2004), "Motivation refers to drives, urges, desires or wishes which initiate a sequence of events known as behaviour..." Advertisers, therefore have the duty to initiate participants in the political decision to move to a desired political action using these three strategies.

Belch and Belch (2001), assert that "consumers' decision process is generally viewed as consisting of stages that consumers pass in purchasing a product or service. They further assert that consumers' decision process is generally viewed as consisting of stages that consumer passes in purchasing a product or service." They further explain that there are internal psychological processes in every consumer at the point of purchase. Belch and Belch (2001), represent these

processes as thus: motivation, perception, attitude, motion, integration and formation as well as learning. To them, advertisers must understand that the first stage in the decision-making process of the consumer is problem recognition. Therefore, advertisers must generate messages that will motivate consumers to solve that problem.

It has also been espoused in the literature that the four personal processes govern the way consumers discern raw data (stimuli) and translate them into feelings, thoughts, beliefs, and actions. These are the perception, learning, persuasion, and motivation processes (Zulkifli et al., 2013). The consumers' mental processes and behaviour are affected by two sets of influences, interpersonal influences: family, society, and culture, and non-personal influences: factors often outside the consumer's control time, place, and environment. These influences further affect the personal processes of perception, learning, persuasion, and motivation. After dealing with these processes and influences the consumer faces the pivotal decision, to buy or not to buy. Taking the final steps typically requires yet another process, the evaluation of alternatives in which the consumer chooses brands, sizes, styles, and colours. If the consumer decides to buy, his or her post-purchase evaluation will dramatically affect all subsequent purchases (Spiteri-Cornish, 2020). The decision-making process is dynamic in nature. Hence, an advertiser who understands this process can develop messages more likely to reach and make sense to consumers.

Theoretical Framework: The Social Judgment Theory

Muzafer Sheriff, Caroline Sheriff and Carl Hovland propounded the social judgment theory in the year 1961. The theory postulates that different individuals interpret messages based on their different

orientations toward the subjects being discussed and their attitudinal composition. It is based on the premise that the effect of a persuasive message on a particular issue, such as an election campaign, depends on the way that the receiver evaluates the position that the message puts across (O' Keefe, 1990 cited in Smith et al., 2006). In other words, a message inscribed on politics on radio or television is accepted or rejected based on the cognitive map of the electorate and the electorate's ego involvement, particularly if it falls within their latitude of acceptance. According to the theory, individuals have three cognitive departments which include latitude of acceptance, latitude of rejection and latitude of non-commitment (Jensen et al., 2021).

The latitude of acceptance comprises messages that are ordinarily acceptable to an individual. The latitude of rejection refers to messages that are considered unacceptable to an individual. The latitude of non-commitment comprises messages which an individual is indifferent about, i.e. the individuals may accept or reject them. Thus, according to this theory, the propensity of a particular political advertisement on radio or television to persuade the electorate will depend on where the political advertisement on radio or television falls within the electorate's latitude or cognitive department. Relying on the social judgment theory, any plan to develop persuasive political advertising requires electorate analysis to identify and understand possible potentialities that determine the target audience's acceptance or rejection of the planned message. In sum, social judgment theory proposes that political advertisers must carefully identify the pre-existing attitude an audience (electorate) might hold about politics on radio or television before crafting the advertising message.

If political advertisers send a message that falls within the electorate's latitude of rejection, the political advertiser will not be successful in his/her persuasive effort. But if a political advertiser sends a message that is mapped out in the electorate's latitude of acceptance, such an advertiser is not only persuading the electorate but is also reinforcing what the electorate already believes. True persuasion, according to the theory, can only occur if the message (advertisement) is sent into an individual's latitude of non-commitment or at the edges of his/her latitude of acceptance.

Materials and Method

Design

The survey design was adopted for this study due to the nature of the study. The design was adopted for this study because the study deals with the opinions, attitudes, behaviours, and characteristics of selected voters and used the findings to represent the larger population.

Area of Study

The area of study is Imo State, Nigeria. Imo is a Southeastern Nigerian state with its capital in Owerri. It has 27 local government areas (LGAs), with an estimated population of 5.4 million in 2016 (Ihejirika et al., 2023). The state is bordered to the north by Anambra State, west and south by Rivers State and to the east by Abia State.

Population of Study

The population of this study comprised the registered voters in Imo State. The number of registered voters for the 2023 governorship election in the state according to the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) is 2,419,922 voters.

Sample Size and Sampling Techniques

The sample size is 385 was derived from the population of 2,419,922 using the Australian Calculator. The sample size was determined at a confidence level of 95 percent, a precision level of 0.05 (5%), and an estimated variance (proportion) of 5% (0.5)

Multi-stage, purposive, and convenience sampling techniques were applied in selecting respondents for this study. One LGA was selected from each senatorial zone and the selection was based on the largest LGA in the zone. Four communities were selected from each LGA, summing up to 12 communities in all. Voters were selected from those communities using a combination of purposive (only voters) and systematic (study of households using skip intervals) sampling techniques.

Method of Data Collection

The researcher used the questionnaire as an instrument of data collection. It was distributed by the researcher and three research assistants by hand.

Method of Data Presentation and Analysis

Raw data generated from the study were manually counted, coded and presented in simple frequency distribution tables. Answers to research questions were given in simple percentages. Chi-square (χ^2) goodness of fit was used to test the hypothesis formulated. The chi-square was used at 0.05 level of significance $X = (0.5)$ and varying freedom (df).

Survey Results

A total of 385 copies of the questionnaire were distributed to respondents across 12 communities. Out of this number, 371 copies were returned while 14 were lost in transition. Meanwhile, 21 copies of the

returned questionnaire were considered invalid because of the improper response patterns in some of the items. Thus, 350

copies of the questionnaire were valid and usable, giving a total of 91% effective return rate.

Table 1: Distribution of Responses Indicating Regularity of Exposure to the Campaign on Radio or Television

	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Daily	182	52.0	52.0
2-4 days a week	112	32.0	84.0
Valid 5-6 days a week	42	12.0	96.0
Can't explain	14	4.0	100.0
Total	350	100.0	

The results in Table 1 show the regularity of exposure to the campaign on radio or television and the data revealed that the majority (52%) of the voters claimed that they saw/listened to the campaigns on radio or television daily and a very sizeable percentage (32%) of the voters

claimed that they saw the on radio or television at least between 2 and 4 days a week. The implication of the data is those campaigns on radio or television are ubiquitous and are often seen by the voters.

Table 2: Distribution of Responses Indicating the Extent of Exposure to the Campaign on Radio or Television Heralding the 2023 Elections

	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
High	56	16.0	16.0
Low	0	0.0	16.0
Moderate	140	40.0	56.0
Valid Very High	0	0	56.0
Very Low	0	0	56.0
Can't Say	98	28	100.0
Total	350	100.0	

The results in Table 2 show that the majority of the respondents (40%) considered their exposure to the campaign on radio or television heralding the 2023 elections as moderate. A sizeable percentage described the extent of exposure as moderate and others could not describe the extent of their exposure

(28%). The implication is that exposure to the campaign on radio or television heralding the 2023 elections ranged from moderate to high and for a sizable percentage, it is unclear how their exposure to the campaign on radio or television was.

Table 3: Distribution of Responses Indicating Whether the Campaign on Radio or Television Influenced Voters to Vote For The Candidates Who Sponsored Them

	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Yes	98	28.0	28.0
Valid No	196	56.0	84.0
Valid Can't say	56	16.0	100.0
Total	350	100.0	

The results in Table 3 show that the vast majority (56%) of the respondents admitted that the campaign on radio or television did not influence them to vote for the candidates who sponsored them. While the researcher can consider the percentage (28%) of those who claimed

that they were influenced by the campaign on radio or television to vote for a candidate as sizeable, the data in Table 3 imply that campaigns does not essentially influence voters to vote for the candidates who sponsored them.

Table 4: Distribution of Responses Indicating Voters' Feelings Upon Being Exposed to The Political Party Campaigns on Radio or Television

	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Excited	42	12.0	12.0
Valid Happy	84	24.0	26.0
Valid Sad	28	8.0	32.0
Valid Indifferent	70	20.0	52.0
Valid Undecided	126	36.0	100.0
Total	350	100.0	

The results in Table 4 show that the majority (36%) of the respondents are people who are not certain about how they feel upon being exposed to the political party on radio or television. But opinions are almost divided between those who feel that they are happy (24%) and those who are uninterested (20%) upon being exposed to political party campaigns on

radio or television. By implication, the majority of the people who saw the political campaigns on radio or television were not able to explain if they felt any emotion upon seeing those on radio or television, whereas a fairly sizable percentage were either happy or not interested in those campaigns on radio or television.

Table 5: Distribution of Responses Indicating Whether the Campaign on Radio or Television Was Appealing Enough to Influence Voting Decision

	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Strongly agree	112	32.0	32.0
Valid Agree	112	32.0	64.0
Valid Disagree	84	24.0	88.0
Valid Strongly disagree	42	12.0	100.0
Total	350	100.0	

The results in Table 5 show that opinions are almost divided between those who strongly agree (32%) and those who merely agree (32%) that the campaign on radio or television was appealing enough to influence the voting decision. However, a sizeable proportion (24%) of the voters disagree that the campaign on radio or television was appealing enough to

influence the voting decision. The implication is that while a majority of the voters seem to agree that campaigns on radio or television were appealing enough to influence the voting decision, data showed that the appeal was not wholesale. Radio or television do not holistically influence the electoral decision.

Table 6: Distribution of Responses indicating whether the Voting Decision in the last Election was based on the Campaign on Radio or Television

	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly agree	14	4.0	4.0
Agree	126	36.0	40.0
Valid Disagree	112	32.0	72.0
Strongly disagree	98	28.0	100.0
Total	350	100.0	

Table 6 above went a step further than the data in Table 5 and shows that apart from being appealing enough to influence the voting decision, it was not clear to decide whether or not the voting decision in Imo State was based on the campaign on radio or television. Opinions were almost equally divided between those who agree (36%) and those who disagree (32%) that the voting decision in the last election was based on the campaign on radio or television. The implication, just as in Table 5, is those campaigns on radio or television do not holistically influence the electoral decision.

H0₁: The electorate's level of exposure to campaigns on electronic media is not associated with their choice of candidates during the election.

H0₂: The electorate's political party affiliation is not associated with their perception of the political campaign on electronic media during the election.

Hypothesis One: The electorate's level of exposure to campaigns on electronic media is not associated with their choice of candidates during the election

Test of the Hypotheses

In this section, the researcher tests two (2) hypotheses proposed in the study, using the Chi-square statistical tool. The analyses were based on the use of SPSS. The hypotheses are tested in the null, thus:

The Chi-square tests below examined the relationship between the electorate's level of exposure to campaign on radio or television and their choice of candidates during the election

Note: significance level = 0.01.

Table 7: Chi-square analysis

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	416.949 ^a	15	.000
Likelihood Ratio	472.543	15	.000

Linear-by-Linear Association	190.979	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	350		

a. 10 cells (41.7%) have an expected count of less than 5. The minimum expected count is .86.

The χ^2 analysis in Table 7 above shows that there is a significant relationship between the electorate's level of exposure to campaign on radio or television and their choice of candidates during the election: thus, χ^2 (df, 15) = 416.949, $p < .0005$.

perception of the political campaign on electronic media during the election

The Chi-square tests below examined the correlation between the electorate's political party affiliation and perception of the political campaign on radio or television during the election.

Hypothesis Two: The electorate's political party affiliation is not associated with their

Table 8: Chi-square analysis

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	253.248 ^a	8	.000
Likelihood Ratio	212.894	8	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	128.523	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	350		

a. 6 cells (40.0%) have an expected count of less than 5. The minimum expected count is .46.

The χ^2 analysis in Table 8 above shows that there is a correlation between the electorate's political party affiliation and perception of the political campaign on radio or television during the election: thus, χ^2 (df, 8) = 253.248, $p < .0005$.

sizeable percentage of the voters saw the campaigns on radio and television at least between 2 and 4 days a week (32%). The implication is not just that the campaign on radio and television were extensively deployed by various political parties, it also means that the campaign on radio and television are ubiquitous and are often seen by the voters. Therefore, in response to research question one, the Imo electorate was reasonably exposed to political campaigns on radio and television during the 2023 election. Exposure to those campaigns on radio and television has effects on the cognitive decisions of the voters based on the assumptions of the information processing theory (Celikoz, Erisen & Sajin, 2019). People are exposed to numerous messages and then, they do respond to the substance of the message they also put the messages through some levels of cognitive processing to ascertain if its substance, rhetoric, or persuasion can be accepted and acted upon. Based on

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this research are discussed here in line with the research questions that guided this study as stated earlier in this thesis. The discussion is based on the analyses of the quantitative data presented in the previous sections.

Research Question 1

To what extent was the Imo electorate exposed to political campaigns on radio and television during the 2023 elections?

Evidence expressed in Table 1 shows the regularity of exposure to the campaign on radio and television in terms of days and the survey data revealed that the majority of the voters saw the campaigns on radio and television daily (52%) and a very

certain other elements, they choose how to act on the message.

Research Question 2

What were the voters' perceptions of political campaigns on radio and television during the 2023 election?

First of all, evidence from the survey expressed in Table 4 shows that a marginal majority (36%) of the respondents are people who are not certain about how they feel upon being exposed to the political party on radio and television. But it is interesting to note that opinions were almost divided between those who feel that they are happy (24%) and those who are uninterested (20%) upon being exposed to the political party on radio and television. What it means is that the majority of the people who saw the political campaign on radio and television were not able to explain if they felt any emotion upon seeing those on radio and television, but there was a reasonable proportion of the people who were either happy whereas there were still people who were not interested about those on radio and television.

By implication, there is still widespread cynicism surrounding the use of radio and television for political advertising. However, with χ^2 (df, 8) = 253.248, $p < .0005$, the χ^2 analysis in Table 8 above shows that there is a correlation between the electorate's political party affiliation and perception of the political campaign on radio and television during the election. The findings above agree with the propositions of the social judgment theory and elaborate likelihood model (Petty & Cacioppo, 1980, Allison et al., 2017). Persuasion results from a person's association with the stimulus or making a simple inference about the merits of the advocated position. When the electorate is exposed to campaigns on radio and television, those who are interested in the candidates or party tend to pay attention to

read and process the information or message presented on radio and television, while those who are less interested will make a judgment based on less elaboration and will seek cues to guide attitude formation.

Research Question 3

Did the political campaigns on radio and television during the 2023 elections influence the Imo electorate to vote for the candidates of their choice?

A pattern was derived from the data in Tables 3, 5, and 6. First of all, data from 3 shows that respondents admitted that the campaign on radio and television did not influence them to vote for the candidates who mounted them (56%). Though, it is not possible to discountenance the opinion of 28% of the respondents who claimed that they were influenced by the campaign on radio and television to vote for the candidate who mounted them.

However, Table 5 shows that the campaign on radio and television for the governorship election was appealing enough to influence voting decision opinions. The implication, if data in Tables 5 and 3 are compared, is that while the majority of the voters seem to agree that the campaign on radio and television for the governorship election was appealing enough to influence the voting decision, the appeal was not wholesale. Table 6 also seems to indicate that apart from being appealing enough to influence the voting decision, it was not clear to decide whether or not the voting decision was truly based on the campaign on radio and television. The implication is those campaigns on radio and television do not holistically influence electoral decisions even when they might be appealing enough to do so. However, the result of the test of the hypothesis revealed that, with χ^2 (df, 15) = 416.949, $p < .0005$, the χ^2 analysis confirmed that there is a significant relationship between the electorate's level of exposure to campaign on radio and

television and their choice of candidates during the election. If the data from the test of hypothesis is compared to the findings in Tables 3, 5 and 6, it can be concluded that the electorate's level of exposure to campaign on radio and television is associated with their choice of candidates during the election but that association is not wholesale.

There is a body of evidence in the literature that conclude that all political advertising allows candidates and parties to push their manifestoes and agenda to the electorate; the idea is to influence voters to vote (Olalekan & Sam, 2018; Akakwandu, 2016). The target of political advertisement is usually voters who must be swayed or influenced through political messages well packaged and delivered by politicians using the mass media and other relevant channels. It is the marketing of the political party's ideas and that of candidates; the aim is to make the electorate exercise their franchise in favour of the parties and their candidates (Tejumaiye et al, 2018).

Conclusion

Political advertising has proven to be a veritable tool for promoting political parties and their candidates during political campaigns and one of the dominant vehicles for political advertisement is the use of radio or television. But to what extent is the electorate exposed to the campaign on radio or television, and do campaigns influence their voting decisions? Evidence from the analysis shows that exposure to campaigns on radio or television in the period leading to the 2023 election was massive. Radio or television had a non-personal, mass appeal. So, everyone was potentially exposed to them. But while the exposure was general, perception towards those campaigns on radio or television was specific. It was mostly contingent on the political party affiliation of the person seeing the on radio or television. That is to

say, the political affiliation of the electorate influence how they perceive political campaign on radio or television.

Based on the findings from this study, it was inferred that exposure to a campaign on radio or television does not necessarily translate to a favourable voting decision. There are other variables, other than on radio or television, that influence voting decisions. The electorate could be attracted to the campaigns but it does not have a corresponding influence on who the electorate vote for. Therefore, the key takeaway in this study is that campaigns on radio or television are a veritable tool for promoting political parties and their candidates during political campaigns, and they have widespread appeal but those appeals do not always translate to voting decisions.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended that:

1. Political parties and politicians should use other media to complement radio or television in their campaigns since they do not have a wholesale effect on voter behaviour.
2. Political parties and candidates should make their political campaign on radio or television more creative and appealing so that it can also appeal to those who have no affiliation with their parties.

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