



TELEVISION NEWS COVERAGE OF THE 2019 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION IN NIGERIA: A CONTENT ANALYSIS APPROACH

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ABSTRACT: *In the Nigerian context, the broadcast media have continued to participate as active stakeholders in the electoral process. They produce various adverts, jingles, programmes and shows that aim at encouraging people to exercise their voting rights, reject electoral violence, and advocate peaceful elections. They also play important roles in social sensitization and mobilization ahead of the elections with many broadcast stations hosting debates for political aspirants. Therefore, this study investigated the impact of the programme's contents of NTA's Political Update on voters' participation and voting patterns in the 2019 general elections in Nigeria. The study adopted mixed methods design of the exploratory type. Sample comprised 185 respondents, including key stakeholders drawn from six geopolitical zones in Nigeria. Data were collected using three instruments; NTA and FRCN Network Programme Contents Analysis Checklist (NFNProCAC); Voters' Electoral Participation Questionnaire (VEPQ) and Key Electioneering Personalities Interview Schedule (KEPIS). Content analysis data were analyzed quantitatively, while survey data were analyzed using SPSS V25, descriptive and inferential statistics. Findings revealed that NTA's Political Update adequately featured voter education contents prior to the 2019 General Election in Nigeria; also, majority of the respondents were regular viewers and listeners and were adequately exposed to the station contents of NTA, featuring more of voters' education contents. Further, findings revealed that there was an overall significant relationship in the electorates' perception of featuring voters' education contents on NTA programmes. Lastly, more voters participated during the last general elections as a result of their exposure to NTA network programmes prior to the 2019 general elections in Nigeria. The study recommended that tv stations should increase the strength of nationwide programmes for effective voters' education.*

KEYWORDS: Agenda-setting theory, Electioneering program, Mass media, Political programmes.



INTRODUCTION

Elections around the world today are the focus of intense media attention and coverage. The elections in the United States drew attention across the world, with innovative strategies being studied, analyzed and adapted in planning election campaigns in most democracies. Election strategies and issues also get extensive coverage (Graber, 2010). The greater dependency on media for getting information on the electoral process, the parties and campaigns in the media are closely followed by citizens for deciding on their voting behaviors and over the years new media technologies are being extensively used in reaching the electorate and also for interacting with the electorate (Jackson & Lilleker, 2009; Zittel, 2009).

Television advertisements are assigned by law to political parties according to their vote share in the previous elections and mandate the time of the day at which advertisements are aired (Ewen, 2014). They exploit this arguably exogenous variation in viewers' exposure to political advertisement by different parties and longitudinal electoral survey data to estimate the effect of advertisement on voting intentions during Mexico's 2012 presidential campaign (Ewen, 2014). They found that political advertisements on TV had a positive, significant and sizable effect on voting intentions. This effect is short-lived (about two weeks), and is stronger in the early weeks of the campaign. Advertisements tend to have no significant impact on voters' knowledge of candidates' political message, and to be more effective at convincing individuals that are more educated, and those who voted for the party in the past. Taken together, these findings suggested that ads do not influence voters by conveying new information but that other mechanisms of persuasion, centered on advert non-informative content, may be at work (Ewen, 2014).

It is an indisputable fact that mass media is the watchdog of any society. It is this enormous responsibility that the Nigeria Constitution (1999) in Chapter iv, Section 39, Sub-section 2 like all modern constitutions across the globe, provided that people are free to own, establish and operate any medium for the dissemination of information, ideas and opinions. Over and above this provision, the 1999 Constitution gives a charge in Chapter ii, Section 22 which categorically states that "the television and other agencies of the mass media shall at all times be free to uphold the fundamental objectives contained in this Chapter and uphold the responsibility and accountability of the Government to the people". It is against the backdrop of these provisions that the mass media could monitor governance in a democracy.

Taken together, the mass media and democracy are inextricably linked. The Media for Democracy Monitor (MDM, 2007) clearly understands this link when it suggests that modern democracy and the mass media are vital, indispensable links between those who govern and those who are governed. If the mass media do not inform the citizens thoroughly and impartially about government policies and their consequences as well as about the alternatives of government policy proposed by opposition parties and civil society, the people's democratic choice is severely limited (Ugande, 2010). Umaru and Abdullahi (2012) equally confirm that the mass media are very important and centrally located in the lives of the people and the democratic process. They went further to establish that because of this centrality, the media justifiably focus their attention and accord high priority to government programmes. Lending credence to this Ende (2013) citing Balkin (1998) argued that the mass media simulate political transparency for "without the mass media", openness and accountability is impossible in contemporary democracies. He further contends that transparency would entail the assistance



mass media give to citizens to understand the operations of government; participate in political decisions; and hold government accountable to the people.

The media, throughout the history of Nigeria, have always been at the forefront of the struggle to establish democracy in the country. Lending credence to this assertion, Obilade (1999) opines that the “press in Africa constitutes an active force in the realization of the goal of the evolution of sustainable democracy in the continent of Africa. He also observed that the press in Africa is playing a prominent role in the democratization process in African states which have non-democratic governments. Going back to the history of the country, during colonial period, it is an established fact that the media is the main agent with which the Nigerian nationalists used to struggle for independence, and by extension the enthronement of democracy in Nigeria. Nigerian nationalist leaders like Chief Anthony Enahoro and Chief M.C.K Ajuluchukwu used their newspapers as veritable weapons to fight against and dethrone colonialism and establish an independent democratic Nigeria. This giant stride by the Nigerian media was carried all through to the first, second, third, and fourth republics respectively. Even during the periods of military rule, Nigerian media fought gallantly for the restoration of democracy. This struggle culminated and ushered the nation to a new era of the fourth republic in May 1999 with a former military head of state in the person of President Olusegun Obasanjo as the democratically elected leader of Nigeria.

Like in many African countries, Nigeria is one of the countries that are in transition to a democracy since 1999 after the military dictatorship ended in 1999. The media system is gradually developing and there is greater dependency on the media especially radio and television, which show distinct support for the political parties and give wide coverage during elections. This study through a content analysis of NTA network examines the coverage given to the last presidential elections in 2019. The coverage of presidential elections in developing democracies presents an awkward moment for the news media, where they ought to strike a balance between fair coverage of all candidates as well as tapping into the advertising boom that an election cycle offers. But the election’s end opens another door for media scholars to delve into the questions of who did what and how (Ladoke, 2021).

Research Objectives

The objectives of the research are:

- To analyze the contents of the NTA programmes, i.e *Political update* on NTA prior to 2019 General Elections in Nigeria;
- To ascertain the extent of exposure of voters to NTA’s *Political update* programme prior to 2019 General Elections in Nigeria;
- To ascertain the perception of respondents on the extent of featuring voter education content on NTA’s *Political update* programme prior to the 2019 General Elections in Nigeria;
- To determine the extent of voting patterns and electoral participation of electorates in 2019 general elections in Nigeria arisen from their exposure to NTA’s *Political update* programme prior 2019 General Elections in Nigeria; and



- To determine the significant relationship in the voters' perception of features of voters' education contents in NTA's *Political update* programme prior 2019 General Elections in Nigeria.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptual Framework

Understanding the Mass Media

The mass media and generally, the products of media culture provide materials out of which people forget their very identities; their sense of selfhood; their notion of what it means to be male or female; their sense of class, of ethnicity and race, of nationality, of sexuality; and of "us" and "them". Thus, media images help shape the view of the people and their deepest values; what they consider good or bad, positive or negative, moral or evil (Kellner and Douglas, 2010). Mass media channels and contents have enabled people pass down their cultural, political and social heritage from generation to generation all over the world, more so media stories provide the symbols, myths, and resources through which people constitute a common culture and through the appropriation of which they insert themselves into their culture (Kellner and Douglas 2010).

Mass media is very essential to democracy in all societies, because access to information is essential to the health of democracy for at least two reasons; firstly, it ensures that citizens make responsible, informed choices rather than acting out of ignorance or misinformation and secondly, information serves a "checking function" by ensuring that elected representatives uphold their oaths of office and carry out the wishes of those who elected them (Centre for Democratic Governance, 2009). Since the inception of the fourth republic in Nigeria in 1999, there have been six general elections in the country, namely; 1999, 2003, 2007, 2011, 2015 and 2019 general elections.

According to Akinfeleye (2003), the relevance of the mass media (communication channels) in any polity is generally drawn from the fact that information is necessary for effective governance and administration. Lack of information or misuse of information or hoarding of information will be counterproductive in governance and/or administration". It is sufficient to say that in modern society, information occupies a very important position in the day to day activities of the modern man. As Akinfeleye (2003) opines, any inadequacy concerning information gathering, processing and dissemination will give room for rumor networking. It is pertinent to make some conceptual clarifications about certain communication channels used in this study in order to avoid ambiguity and provide ground to make inferences. The concepts that are reviewed below are newspaper, radio, television, internet and interpersonal communication process. This is in line with the focus of the study.

Based on this understanding and realization, political parties and their candidates resulted to embarking on massive campaign for votes from the people using political marketing tools like public relations, advertising, radio, television, outdoor media, print media, handbills, social media as well as mobile phone message broadcast and direct engagements with the electorates. Some and indeed all of these media channels were collectively useful to canvas for votes in the 2019 presidential elections in Nigeria. It signals the fact that people have high interests in



politics in the Nigeria, such that the elections attracted varied participation by the electorates (Ladoke, 2021)

The purpose of political participation is wrapped up in the concept of representation, the linking of the interests of the citizens with the policies of the state. Additionally, political participation is closely linked to voter's education, which is hinged largely on the role of the media industry. The media is expected to play a prominent role in educating the members of the public through various channels. Therefore, free, independent and professional journalism both online and offline serves an essential role in democracies, providing information that allows citizens to make informed decisions inside and outside the voting booth. This holds the power to account for the integrity, peace and fairness of an election. Journalism can also contribute to the electoral agenda by requiring politicians to respond to the public, and to focus on subjects of real public interest (Myers, 2004).

This mediation is not neutral but affects how political processes are communicated. Talking of general elections, it is clear that "talk is endlessly circulated around (media, politics, public relations, press conferences) in practices of commentary, quotation and polemical reformulation. Statements are thus re-presented in different discursive domains, and in this representation they are transformed" (Ojekwe & Izeghe, 2015). Among the notable mass media is the radio and it is the most important medium of mass communication in Nigeria, since about 50% of the population of the country is largely illiterate, that is, unable to read and write. Radio is a universal and versatile medium when communication with the mass of the people is required and can be used for the benefit of society also throughout the world (Djupe & Peterson, 2010).

Nwuneli (2017) asserts that political parties and their candidates are becoming increasingly aware of the effectiveness of radio programmes and its influence on getting the electorates to choose a particular candidate or party over the other by way of informing them. Radio programmes, particularly the indigenous ones during election periods, can increase electoral process participation and voting patterns because they bridge the communication gap between political parties, candidates and electorates. Hence, political parties and candidates all around the world devote a lot of financial resources to radio commercials to sell themselves as the preferred brand to the electorates. Interestingly, most questions raised during elections are concerned with voting patterns i.e. why the electors voted for a candidate over the other and the implication of their choice (Nwuneli, 2017). Olatubosun (2013) says many media scholars have established the fact that Nigerians love listening to radio and is the medium with the largest audience; it has been argued that radio is the most accessible of all the mass media types in Nigeria. Radio is the most patronized means of mass communication in Nigeria (Keyton, 2006). Ferric and Posavec (2013) analyzed the radio capacity to influence people towards voting patterns.

The media industry, including the broadcast stations, as well as other government and non-governmental organizations are also involved during preparations toward general elections. One of such strategies has been the use of voter education programmes on indigenous radio stations as purveyor of eliciting change in the electorates' participation, especially among the rural communities. Therefore, the need to investigate the performance of indigenous radio broadcasting programmes in terms of their impacts on listeners especially in relation to voters' education as entrenched in the media code of Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) in Nigeria (Ladoke, 2021).



Television as Instrument for Political Awareness and Election in Nigeria

A major area where political actors spend money to disseminate their messages to their (consumers' electorate) is in the area of political advertising. According to McNair (2002), political advertising "refers to the purchase and the use of advertising, in order to transmit political messages to a mass audience. The television used contemporary political advertising which can be seen as an important means of informing citizens about who is standing, and what they are offering the citizens in policy terms". Many political parties were registered to contest for the 2019 general elections in Nigeria. Since true democracy involves the participation of an informed and rational electorate, all legitimate measures and strategies should be exploited to make it possible for the citizens to have the required information or alternatives to act on.

Hallin and Mancini (2004) note that the television is assuming much of the information that political parties once controlled. Instead of learning about an election at a campaign rally or from party canvassers, the television has become the primary source of campaign information. There has been a tendency for political parties to decrease their investments in neighbor canvassing, rallies and other direct contact activities and devote more attention to campaigns through television. The growth of electronic media, especially television, has tended to diminish the role of the party. The electronic media also makes it easier to communicate events and issues through personalities. Swanson (2004) notes that in place of or in addition to traditional campaign practices such as rallies of the party faithful, political parties and candidates relied on the sophisticated use of the television programmes to persuade voters the "consumers" of political communication to support them at election time, and they offered campaigns that feature the appealing personalities of party leaders. Television provides an aesthetic platform for the presentation (airing) of political advertising and electioneering campaign messages.

Norris (2004) asserts that "fair access to the airwaves by opposition parties, candidates and groups is critical for competitive free and fair elections". He points out that it is particularly important that state – owned or public television stations should be open to a plurality of political viewpoints during campaigns, without favoring the government. In supporting these positions, Swanson (2004) asserts that "editorial independence, freedom from close government supervision and censorship, and the like creates society. It should also assist collective organizations to mobilize support; help them to operate as representative vehicles for the views of their supporters, aid them to register effective protest, develop and promulgate alternatives. In order words, the representational role of television includes helping to create the condition in which alternative viewpoints and perspectives are brought fully into play.

According to Curran and Gurevitch (2005), another democratic function of television is to assist the realization of the common objectives of society through agreement or compromise between conflicting interests. The television contributed to this process by facilitating democratic procedure for resolving conflict and defining collectively agreed aims. Also, television should brief the electorate about the political choices involved in elections, and so help to constitute elections and defining moments for collective decision about the public direction of society. The television show also facilitates organized representation by giving due publicity to the activities, programmes and thinking of organized groups in addition to the formal processes of government and opposition parties. But the television system is itself an important mechanism for collective self-reflection. By staging a public dialogue in which diverse interests participate, the television also plays a direct role in assisting the search for



areas of common agreement and compromise. It also provides an adequate way in which people can engage in a wider public discussion that can result in the modification of social attitudes affecting social relationships between individuals and groups.

It is impossible to have a truly democratic society without an efficient television system. A political system that lays claim to democracy without a right mass media would certainly be a “malnourished” and “still-birth political contraption”. That is why Mc Nair (2002) has aptly pointed out that “in democratic political systems, television functions both as transmitters of political communication which originates outside the media organization itself and as senders of political messages constructed by Journalists”. He lists five functions of the television in a democratic society to include the following: First, they must inform citizens of what is happening around them (what we may call the “surveillance or monitoring” functions of the media).

Second, they must educate as to the meaning and significance of the “fact” (the importance explains the seriousness with which journalists protect their objectivity, since their value as educators presumes a professional detachment from the issues being analyzed).

Thirdly, the media must provide a platform for public political discussion, facilitating the information of “public opinion”, and feeding that opinion back to the public. This must include the provision of space for the expression of dissent without which the motion of democratic consensus would be meaningless. The television’s fourth function is to give public to governmental and political institutions the “watchdog” role of journalism.

Finally, television in democratic societies serves as a channel for the advocacy of political viewpoints. Parties require an outlet for the articulation of their policies and programmes to a mass audience, and thus the television must be open to them. Furthermore, some media, mainly in the print sector, will actively endorse one or other of the parties at sensitive times such as elections. In this latter sense, the media advocacy function may also be viewed as one of persuasion (Mc Nair, 2002). In short, democracy presumes that an open state in which people are allowed to participate in decision-making, and are given access to the media and other information networks through which advocacy occurs (Mc. Nair, 2002)

It also presumes, as we have stated, an audience sufficiently educated and knowledgeable to make rational & effective use of the information circulating in the public sphere.

Hallin and Mancini (2004) explain that “in political markets, electors need information to judge the record of government and to select among alternative candidates & parties. If citizens are poorly informed, if they lack practical knowledge, they may cast ballots that fail to reflect their real interests. Moreover, policy makers need accurate information about citizens to respond to public policy salience”. Sorting refers to the process by which politicians are selected to hold office. The kind of information the media provides can be important to voters who are deciding who to put in charge. This includes information about candidates’ previous track records. Their actions while in office may also be an important source of information about their underlying motivation or competence. By publishing stories or advertisements that responsibly cast light on this, the media can be a powerful force. The role of the media in achieving discipline is most relevant in situations of hidden action. This involves exposure of activities which perpetrators do not want the public to know. The media can also affect which issues are salient to voters.



Theoretical Framework

Agenda Setting Theory

The basic assumption of Agenda Setting Theory is that the mass media may not be particularly successful in telling their audience what to think, but has stunningly success in telling them what to think about (Scammell, 2015). Indisputably, a macro and direct consequence of the gate-keeping function of the media is the agenda setting function of the media. Agenda setting hypothesis is an indispensable component of media functional studies, which explains how the media, through their contents, determine issues that attract public attention and the importance attached to such issues by the public (Scammell, 2018). Tracing the historical background to the agenda-setting paradigm, there has been investigation into understanding how the media shape the perception of the audience about issues in their environment.

Meanwhile, it has been acknowledged by scholars who had empirically examined and fine-tuned the theorist work by conceptualizing and popularizing agenda setting theory with the statement that; the media may not be particularly successful in telling their audience ‘what to think’ but they are stunningly successful in telling their audience what to think about (Schriner, 2014). Thus, the agenda setting hypothesis to an empirical research has been noted with regards to the 1968 Presidential Election in the United States of America. Findings revealed that there is a strong positive relationship between the emphasis placed on different campaign issues by the media and voters' judgment on the importance of such issues (Schriner, 2014).

In essence with Agenda Setting Theory, the audience tends to regard topics and issues highlighted or which are given prominence by the media as high on the agenda of public discourse. The researchers further give a practical and more articulate interpretation of the agenda-setting theory, implying that; in choosing and displaying news, editors, newsroom staff and broadcasters play an important part in shaping political reality. Readers learn not only about a given issue, but how much importance to attach to that issue from the amount of information in a news story and its position (Tulloch, 2016).

Invariably, the mass media may well determine the important issues, that is, the media may set the 'agenda' of the campaign. The spectrum of the agenda setting theory has been widened, such that some branded their scholarly revelation as agenda-building (Wring, 2016). This explains the phenomenon as a collective process by which the media, the government and the citizens reciprocally influence one another when it involves formulation of public policies. The basic premise of agenda-building is that the media profoundly affect how a society determines issues of importance by mobilizing the various societal institutions towards a consensus (Wring, 2017). This suggests that the media are conditionally powerful in determining societal agenda for public discourse.

Nevertheless, the media remain a key factor in that process because of their enormous influence on other institutions. Albeit, agenda-setting researches have shown that in many cases, the media audiences do perceive some issues as important, following the nature of coverage given such issues by the media. Though, the use of influence is an acceptance of the fact that the media may not constitute necessary and sufficient causes, some studies have demonstrated that changes in behavior patterns can arise from the nature of media coverage (Zavala, 2011). Consequently, possible factors that account for agenda setting have been identified as follows:



- (1) The quality or frequency of reporting on an issue;
- (2) Prominence given to the reports; through headline display, pictures and layout in newspapers, magazines, film, graphics, or timing on radio and television;
- (3) The degree of conflict generated in the reports; and
- (4) Cumulative media-specific effects over time (Falade, 2014).

Therefore, the opportunity for agenda setting by the mass media becomes enhanced when the value-structure of a society is in a state of flux. Thus, if these hypotheses are true of agenda-setting, it is obvious that the media emphases (and more specifically newspaper emphases) can also be responsible for escalation and de-escalation of personality-induced political conflicts, consequent upon the coverage given to such conflicts by the newspapers or other media, such as radio or television. Put in another way, the agenda setting tenets and propositions create a context in which public opinions about personality-induced political conflicts as reported by newspapers and the electronics media are created and crystallized. Thus, how positive or negative these opinions are may be contributory to the escalation and de-escalation of the conflicts (Ojo, 2014).

Perhaps a brief insight into the nature of the audience of the mass media could offer some understanding of how media audiences are affected by media messages, which are arrived at through gate-keeping and agenda-setting operations of the media. The media audience can be defined as a new form of collectivity, made possible by the condition of modern societies. This audience from other social forms, such as a group, a crowd, and the public, by referring to it as “mass” of audience (Ugwu-Daniel, 2015). The essential feature of this audience is that it is large, heterogeneous, widespread, and its members could not know each other and this is very true of radio and television broadcasting.

These were distilled from audiences of theaters and musical performances, where people from diverse backgrounds are brought together in a particular place. Such audiences historically are found in urban centers and they are often gathered with commercial motives. Another author’s commentary on the framework, posited that because of the public and anonymous character of these audiences, their behavior is subject to surveillance and social control by producers and disseminators of information (George-Genyi, 2015). Comparatively, the modern mass media audience show similar characteristics, but are also different in a number of ways.

Almond and Verba, (2015) point out that the mass media audience is separated by time and distance, much more diversified, scattered, and heterogeneous and globalized. Drawing from the insights and inspirations provided by some other scholarly works, an attempt was made on description of the features of the audience of mass media as being both products of social context and a response to a particular pattern of media provision. They are characterized and defined in terms of place (as in local or international media), people (as in segmentation into gender, age, political beliefs, income, among others), medium or channel (as in type of media), content (as in genre, subject matters, style), time (as in, day-time or prime-time audience) and by fleeting or enduring attention span (Osumah & Ikelegbe, 2009).



Application of Agenda Setting Theory to this Study

Therefore, the agenda setting theories related to this study in that FRCN programmes on politics and NTA political update programmes are examined. It is assumed that these two contents could positively influence voters' electoral participation and voting patterns in the 2019 general election in Nigeria.

Public Choice Theory

Public choice theory argues that economic self-interest is the driving force of politics; it relates with the Uses and Gratification Theory because with public choice theory, people will vote for the candidate that they believe is going to give them the greatest access to economic prosperity (Enli & Skogerbø, 2013). This denotes that people will vote for a candidate that will better their lives. Again, public choice refers to the use of economic tools to deal with traditional problems of the society and its contents as well as the assumption of the theory including the study of political behaviors. Public choice theory was developed by a renowned economist; James Buchanan in 1964 (Lyons, 2008). Political science and the subset of positive political theory studies self-interested agents (i.e. voters, politicians, bureaucrats) and their interactions, which can be represented in a number of ways, using standard constrained utility maximization. Public-choice analysis has roots in positive analysis ("what is") but is often used {by whom?} for normative purposes ("what ought to be") in order to identify a problem or to suggest improvements to constitutional rules (i.e., constitutional economics). The theory also proposed a fascinating distinction of public choice, the initial level at which a constitution is written and agreed upon by the founders of a country (Lyons, 2008).

Public choice also connotes politics without romance, because he argued that people vote in their best economic interest period. Further, public choice theory, for example, a person working for a local government, whether in the school system, or on the police force, will more likely vote for a government that increases taxes, because the voter expects some of that increased tax revenue to come his or her way in the form of higher wages or more work. The proponent of the public choice theory argued persuasively further that most people have a strong sense of how changes in government will benefit them. This relationship between voters and their self-interest drives all types of political involvement or participation and action not only voting, but also fundraising, lobbying and grassroots organizing (Abizadeh, 2015).

Review of Past Extant Studies

Television has been used for the propagation of development related issues. One of such studies was conducted by Adesina, Okunnu and Sukurat (2017) where the authors assessed the role of television programmes on community development with a focus on the *Lotunlotun* programme on Broadcasting Corporation of Oyo State (B.C.O.S.) television. The study attempted to assess how the programme was packaged to mobilize people at the community level. It also attempted to determine the peoples' opinion on the *Lotunlotun* programme and the influence of the programme on the target audience. The study adopted development media theory and participatory media theory as its theoretical framework. The subjects of the study were youths and adults who were the target audience of the *Lotunlotun* programme (people within the age range of 18-50). The study utilized questionnaires and interviews to solicit responses from respondents. The study proved that television programmes play positive roles in community development. It was discovered that the objectives of the programme were to improve the ways



of life of people and bring the government closer to the people. It was discovered that due to the positive influence of the programme, the majority of the respondents have started contributing to developmental issues in the community.

Similarly, Amannah (2017) followed the scholarship tradition by studying the role of the media in national development. The author argued that media, including television, plays a very important and crucial role in enlightening and educating the populace. The media can aid public involvement through advocating issues and transferring knowledge, skills and technologies to the people. While the survey method was used for the study, findings revealed that the media in Nigeria, its bid to effectively carry out its core responsibilities often face daunting challenges ranging from anti-press laws, inadequate remuneration seeming overriding interests of media owners, to lack of self-censorship. However, the study concluded that the media must continually take into consideration the sociocultural condition under which it operates, even as it does not lose sight of the universal commitments of the profession. The study had recommended among others that the government give a free hand to the media in carrying out their duties by expunging obnoxious laws that infringe on the effective journalism practice.

Sanni and Ojewale (2013) studied the media influence in awareness creation for government development projects in Lagos state, Nigeria. Agenda setting theory and uses and gratification theory were used as the theoretical framework for the study. Using a descriptive survey method, 172 respondents from four local government areas were interviewed via self-administered questionnaire. The study revealed that the media keep Nigerians averagely informed on government development projects, sways individual convictions of people in such a way that they consider projects given more coverage as truly important in comparison to their previously held beliefs. However, fewer fractions of people affected by the media coverage are shown by this study as those who eventually participate in the development process by performing civic duties such as tax payment. It was therefore recommended that the media must equip the public with adequate information on basic rights and entitlements, public services, public budgets, health, housing projects, and road rehabilitation projects.

Also, Albert-James (2012) studied the role of public television in national development communication in post-colonial developing countries using public television service in Ghana. The author considered the agency of Ghana Television in social development by analyzing producers' perceptions of their production system and broadcast outcomes. The author argued that Ghanaian public television service faces many challenges that are primarily political and historical. Producers struggle to straddle a line between instinctively championing ideals within content creation processes and maintaining an ill-functioning system and politicized culture of production. The study found that there were difficulties inherent in delivering a truly public service remit, within the historicised post-colonial context, and highlights the challenges as well as opportunities for improving the delivery of public television service.



METHODOLOGY

The study adopted mixed methods design of the exploratory type owing to the fact that the researchers intend to view the coverage of radio political programmes prior to 2019 elections. The population of the study comprised the entire NTA's political programme between January and February, 2019. Sample comprised 185 respondents, including key stakeholders drawn from six geopolitical zones in Nigeria. Data were collected using three instruments; NTA's Network Programme Contents Analysis Checklist (NFNProCAC); Voters' Electoral Participation Questionnaire (VEPQ) and Key Electioneering Personalities Interview Schedule (KEPIS). Content analysis data were analyzed quantitatively, while survey data were analyzed using SPSS V25 for the descriptive and inferential statistics. The instrument was structured in two parts of A and B; Section A has questions on the demography of the respondents while section B was prepared in a Likert Summated rating. The demographics of the respondents were analyzed with the aid of weighted average with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS v 23).

METHOD OF DATA ANALYSIS

Two approaches were adopted to analyze the data collected i.e. qualitative for NTA programmes content analysis, and the key personalities interview while quantitative methods of analyzing were adopted for the survey data that was collected through the use of questionnaires. Thus, data that was obtained from the questionnaire were analyzed using the Scientific Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software V25 for coding and computation. Thereafter, data were analyzed using quantitative data analysis of descriptive and inferential methods. This study investigated the influence of NTA programmes contents on electoral participation and voting pattern in 2019 general elections in Nigeria.

PRESENTATION OF DATA

Demographic Data Analysis

Table 1: Demographic Information of the Respondents (N=185)

Variable		Frequency	Percentage
Station	NTA	185	100%
Listenership			
Gender	Male	98	53.5%
	Female	87	46.5%
		185	
Age	18 - 28 years	50	27.0%
	29 - 39 years	79	42.7%
	40 - 50 years	37	20.1%
	51 years & above	19	10.3%
		185	



Highest Educational Qualification	No formal education	16	8.6%
	SSCE	52	28.1%
	NCE/ND	33	17.8%
	HND/B.Sc.	66	35.6%
	M.Sc.	14	7.56%
	M.Phil/Ph.D	4	2.1%
	Missing data	17	8.4%
Marital Status	Single	43	23.3%
	Married	102	55.1%
	Separated	15	8.1%
	Divorced	11	5.9%
	Widowed	14	7.6%

Analysis of Research Questions

Research Question One: What were the predominant contents of the NTA programmes, i.e. *Political update* on NTA prior to 2019 General elections in Nigeria?

To answer this research question, contents of the NTA programmes were analyzed as presented in Table 1. i.e. *Political update in NTA* (between Jan 4th 2019 - Feb 22nd 2019).

To further ascertain the actual content of the two programmes, audio recordings of selected episodes were extracted and stored in compact disc.

Table 2: Content Analysis of selected episodes of NTA *Political update* programme prior to 2019 Presidential election in (between Jan 4th 2019- Feb 22nd 2019).

Week/Date	Programme Contents	Guests status as at the time of programme broadcast
4/01/2019	Procedure for voters' registration	Independent National Electoral Commission.
11/01/2019	Voter's conduct before election day	Independent National Electoral Commission Official
18/01/2019	Voter's conduct during election	Director for National Orientation Agency in Abuja
25/01/2019	Sensitization against violence during election	National Union of Road Transport Workers Chairman.
01/02/2019	Voter's right to elect leaders	Public Analyst
08/02/2019	Voter's handling of permanent voter's card	Independent National Electoral Commission Official
15/02/2019	Voter's handling of ballot paper	Independent National Electoral Commission Official
22/02/2019	Voter's understanding of electoral offenses	Nigerian Police Public Relations Officer in Abuja

Source: Field Survey, 2021



As presented in Table 2, the programme contents of *Political update* on NTA listed are discussed as follows:

Week One: The NTA political update programme content featured procedures for voter's registration; the guest enlightened the audience on the various procedures and stages which must be followed by voters while registering for the election. The guest educated the audience on the importance of registering before the election period. In the course of enlightening the audience on the importance of registration of voters before election, there were series of phone calls on the programme and the audience asked various questions which were answered by the guest.

Week Two: On voter's conduct before Election Day, the audience was educated on the various ways they should act before Election Day by the guest. The audience phoned in onto the programme to ask questions which were answered by the guest.

Week Three: On voter's conduct during election, the audience was educated on the various things they should do and not do during election, some of the things they were told not to do are; taking campaign materials for political parties or candidate to the polling unit, public display of where they thumb printed on the ballot paper, discussing about candidates or political parties at the polling unit. Some of the things they were asked to do are getting to the polling unit on time to check their names, distancing themselves after election from the ballot boxes. The audience phoned in to ask questions and they gave their various opinions on the topic.

Week Four: On sensitization against violence during election, the guest explained that violence during has different forms ranging from fighting at the polling unit to ballot snatching and he also gave various ways to avoid violence during. The audience phoned in to add their opinions on the topic discussed and various questions were asked which were answered.

Week Five: Week Nine: On voter's right to elect leaders, the audience was educated on their various rights provided for by the 1999 constitution of Nigeria and specifically their right to vote and be voted for as citizens of the country. The audience phoned in and contributed to the programme.

Week Six: On voter's handling of permanent voter's card, the Independent National Electoral Commission official invited into the radio programme as a guest educated the audience what permanent voter's card means and ways to properly maintain and handle it when it has been given to them. The audience contributed to the programme by giving their opinions on the topic and asking various questions which were answered.

Week Seven: On voter's handling of ballot papers, the guest invited into the programme thoroughly educated the audience on what a ballot paper means, when and where it is used and also how to properly handle it. There were a series of phone-ins on the programme by the audience and they gave their opinions and asked questions which were properly answered.

Week Eight: On voter understanding of electoral offenses, the guest gave adequate explanation on what electoral offenses, the various types of electoral offense and the punishment for these offenses. The audience phoned in to also contribute to the show.



In summary, findings from the program content analysis revealed that NTA political updates on TV programmes featured Voter Education contents extensively prior to the 2019 General election in Nigeria.

Table 2: Analysis of Key Personalities Interview from Independent National Electoral Commission Official, Professionals, and Human Right Activists on the Impact of NTA programme prior to 2019 General Election in Nigeria.

S/ N	Construct	KPI-1 (Political personalities)	KPI-2 (Human right activist)	KPI-3 (INEC Officials)	KPI-4 (Professional s)	KPI-5 (Public Analyst)	Summary
1.	Perception about features of political conduct on NTA programme.	The program gives enlightenment on political issues.	Showcasing personalities relating to political issues.	The program educates the populace about the electoral process.	Encouraged voters' participation in the voting process.	Giving the masses their rights to vote.	The programme had a positive impact on voters' education.
2.	Perception about featuring political education conduct on the NTA programme	Right of the citizens to vote.	Generated great awareness to the public on politics.	To know the feedback from the politicians.	The programme helps the audience to know much about voters' education.	The program brought the government to the people's doorstep.	The contents of the programme has great influence on voters concerning awareness of citizens' right to vote.
3.	Perception about featuring content on electioneering .	Promote election processing.	Building bridges among voters and politicians.	Meaningful political discussion featured on the programme.	Educates people on voting guidelines.	Help in knowing about the right choice of candidate.	The programs promotes meaningful discussions on electioneering processes
4.	Perception of the program impacts on reaching out to listeners at the grass roots.	The program is an eye opener to the listeners.	Enlightening the grass root people in the election.	It has a greater impact on the voters to determine the winner during an election.	Opportunity to know the experienced candidate.	It impacted knowledge into voters on political parties and candidates.	The programme gives rooms for political enlightenment of the people at the grassroots.



5.	Perception of the program providing guidance on choice of candidates.	Influenced the voting pattern positively.	Guides on knowing the right party and the candidate to be voted for.	Provides a clear understanding of candidates' choices.	Provide advice on voting buying.	It helps voters to choose the best candidate.	The radio program guides the election on the choice of candidate.
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In summary, the key personalities interviewed for this study univocally perceived that the *Political update* programme on NTA had a positive impact on voters' education. Just as it has been established earlier that the programme adequately features voting related contents, hence, the primary objective of featuring such content would be to educate voters. Therefore, listeners get educated on election related matters by being receptive to the programme. Also, the personalities averred that the contents of the programme had great influence on voters' awareness of their right to vote as citizens.

Research Question Two: What is the extent to which voters were exposed to NTA's *Political update* prior 2019 General elections in Nigeria?

To answer the research question, questionnaire was administered among respondents and findings are presented in Table 3

Table 3: Extent to which voters were exposed to NTA's *Political update* programme prior 2019 General elections in Nigeria. (N=185)

Statement	Regularly (weekly)	Occasionally (twice a month)	Rarely (once a month)	Not at all	Mean	Std. Dev
How often do you listen to NTA station	152 (82.2%)	33 (17.8%)	-	-	3.82	.384
How often do you listen to <i>Political update</i> programme on NTA	82 (44.3%)	102 (55.1%)	1 (0.5%)	-	3.44	.508
How often do you listening to <i>political update</i> on NTA between January 4 th 2019 to February 22 nd 2019	144 (77.8%)	40 (21.6%)	1 (0.5%)	-	3.77	.433

Aggregate mean = 3.68c

Decision mean = 2.50

Source: *Field Survey 2021*



Table 3 revealed that the majority 384 (99.4%) were exposed to the NTA *Political update* Programme prior to the 2019 General Election in Nigeria.

Research Question Three: What is the extent of featuring voter education content on NTA's *Political update* prior to the 2019 general elections in Nigeria?

To answer this research question, data were gathered from respondents who were regular viewers and listeners of the NTA programmes and participated in the 2019 General Election in Nigeria. Their responses are presented as follows:

Table 4: Extent of Featuring of Voters Education contents on NTA's Political update programme prior to 2019 General Election in Nigeria. (N=185)

S/N	<i>Political update</i> programme content	Always	Sometime	Rarely	Never	Mean	Std.Dev
1.	Procedures for voter registration.	141 (76.2%)	41 (22.2%)	3 (1.6%)	-	3.75	.472
2.	Conduct of Voters before the day of election	26 (14.4%)	153 (82.7%)	6 (3.2%)	-	3.11	.403
3.	Conduct of Voters during the election.	73 (39.5%)	94 (50.8%)	18 (9.7%)	-	3.30	.637
4.	Voters conduct after the election.	64 (34.6%)	114 (61.6%)	7 (3.8%)	-	3.31	.539
5.	Voting procedures before election.	68 (36.8%)	101 (54.6%)	16 (8.6%)	-	3.28	.614
6.	Handling of ballot paper by Voters.	55 (29.7%)	114 (61.6%)	16 (8.6%)	-	3.21	.584
7.	Understanding of electoral offenses.	84 (45.4%)	89 (48.1%)	12 (6.5%)	-	3.39	.608
8.	Handling of permanent voter's cards by Voters.	58 (31.4%)	116 (62.7%)	11 (5.9%)	-	3.25	.557
9.	Voter's right to elect leaders of their choices	55 (29.7%)	112 (60.5%)	18 (9.7%)	-	3.20	.597
10.	Voter's right to choose the party of their choice.	124 (67%)	47 (25.4%)	14 (7.6%)	-	3.59	.628
11.	Voter's understanding of	89 (48.1%)	85 (45.9%)	11 (5.9%)	-	3.42	.604



	not to sell their votes.						
12.	Discussion against use as thuggery by politicians during elections.	57 (30.8%)	118 (63.8%)	10 (5.4%)	-	3.25	.547
13.	Discouragement on collection of gifts such as money before election.	55 (29.7%)	114 (61.6%)	16 (8.6%)	-	3.21	.584
14.	Need for Voter's to monitor their votes during elections.	74 (40.0%)	96 (51.9%)	14 (7.6%)	1 (0.5%)	3.31	.633
15.	Discussion on voter's handling of voter cards.	125 (67.6%)	47 (25.4%)	13 (7.0%)	-	3.61	.618

Aggregate mean = 3.35

Decision mean = 2.50

Table 4 revealed that the majority of the respondents with Aggregate mean of 3.35 reported that NTA *Political update* extensively featured Voter Education content prior to 2019 General Election in Nigeria.

In summary, Table 4a shows the perception of voters on featuring voter education content on NTA's *Political update* programs prior to the 2019 general elections in Nigeria. As shown in the Tables, voters perceived that the contents of the both stations on voters' education were adequately featured and to a great extent as the mean scores of both NTA's *Political update* program were 3.35. The observed mean scores were far greater than the decision mean of 2.50. This implies that the contents of NTA's *Political update* program 2019 general elections in Nigeria were adequately featured.

Research Question Four: What is the voting pattern of the electorates in 2019 general elections in Nigeria arisen from their exposure to NTA's *Political update* program in the Nigeria general elections held in 2019?

To answer this question, voting patterns of the electorates 2019 General Election in Nigeria arisen on their exposure to NTA's *Political update* program were subjected to t-test statistics and the result is presented thus:

Table 5: Voting Patterns of the Electorates in 2019 General Election in Nigeria arisen from their exposure to NTA's *Political update* programs

Exposure	N	Mean	Std.Dev	Df	T	p-value
NTA	195	10.83	1.230			

Source: *Field Survey, 2021*



Table 5 shows the voting patterns of the electorates in 2019 General Election in Nigeria arisen on their exposure to NTA's *Political update*. The Table revealed the mean scores of voters as a result of their exposure to NTA's *Political update* programme prior to 2019 were 10.83. The mean difference is 0.25. When subjected to the data for further investigation, t-test statistics were carried out and the result showed that the difference in the mean scores is statistically significant.

This implies that voters' exposure was in NTA and this resulted in their participation.

1 Testing of Hypotheses

H₀₁: There will be no significant relationship in the voters' perception of features of voters' education contents in NTA programmes prior to the 2019 general election in Nigeria.

To test this hypothesis, responses from the respondents were subjected to chi square analysis and the result is presented in Table 6(a).

Table 6: Summary of Chi Square analysis of Voters' Perception of Featuring of Voters' Education Contents on NTA Programmes

FM station	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	df	X ²	p-value
NTA	185	50.19	3.544	17	245.151	0.000

Significant at $p \leq 0.05$

Table 6 shows the Chi square analysis of the voters' perception of features of voters' education contents in NTA's *Political update* programmes. The Table revealed that for NTA, the p-value 0.000 is less than 0.05 level of confidence ($df = 17$, $X^2 = 245.151$). Thus, finding revealed that there was a significant relationship in the perception of features of voters' education contents of NTA's *Political update*. Further, the hypothesis was further tested on the overall analysis by merging of the NTA programmes on the two stations as presented in Table 6(b) presents

Table 7: Summary of chi square analysis of Impact of Voters' Participation Arisen from their Exposure to NTA's *Political update* program prior to 2019 general elections in Nigeria.

	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Df	X ²	p-value	Remark
Exposure arisen	185	10.93	1.023	7	626.095	0.000	Significant t

Significant at $p \leq 0.05$

Table 7 shows the Chi-square analysis of the impact of voters' participation arising from their exposure to NTA's *Political update* program 2019 general elections in Nigeria. The Table revealed that the p-value 0.000 is less than 0.05 level of confidence ($df = 7$, $X^2 = 626.095$). Thus, findings revealed that there was a significant impact of voters' participation arising from their exposure to NTA's *Political update* program 2019 general election in Nigeria. The implication of this finding is that more voters participated in 2019 general elections in Nigeria



and this could be as a result of their exposure to NTA's *Political update* program general elections in Nigeria.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

Findings from the contents of NTA's *Political update* TV programs prior to the 2019 general elections in Nigeria were adequately featured issues revolving around voter participation and voting pattern. This is a further indication that TV programmes are closer to the citizenry than any other programmes when it comes to election and voting related matters. Prior to the 2019 general elections in Nigeria, the NTA's *Political update* program selected for this study already was featuring election related contents such as procedure for voters' registration, voters' conduct before and during election, sensitization against violence and selling of votes during election, handling and maintaining of permanent voter's card and ballot paper, voters' understanding of electoral offenses, voters' right to elect leaders.

Again, the NTA's *Political update* programme featured voters' right to the choice of political party, consequences of vote selling, violence and ballot snatching during election, voters' right after election, sensitization against political thuggery and hooliganism, sensitization of voters on the importance of free, fair and credible election, featuring of major governorship candidates and voters' conduct after election. All these election related matters were discussed by politicians, election experts or Independent National Electoral Commission officials, public analysts, professionals, and human right activists. Therefore, there is a high possibility that the contents were well delivered towards educating listeners on election related matters. This implies that the indigenous radio programmes selected for this study are good platforms for qualitative political and voter education.

There is no doubt that voters' rights are an important topical issue in voter education. Therefore, if the programme had a positive impact on voters' education, it would significantly influence the awareness of voters about their voting rights. In addition, the personalities reported that the programme promotes meaningful discussions on electioneering processes; gives rooms for political enlightenment of the people at the grassroots; and guides the election on choice of candidate. This finding is in line with the findings of a study that also found that voter education in Akoko land in 2015, impacted minimally on the respondents resulting in their skewed knowledge and voting patterns. This is a strong indication that broadcast media, when they are National Network links and when they feature key aspects of the life of the citizens like voting, could play a key role in ensuring that Nigerians participate in the electoral process and that its outcomes are credible and acceptable to the generality of the entire nation (Agbu, 2016).

This finding corroborates a study on the significant effect of Voter Education Programme (VEP) on electorates' knowledge of voting in Anambra State. This implies that national radio programmes when used to feature election related topics significantly increased the knowledge of voting among electorates in Anambra State (Bormann & Golder, 2013). Such topics found in the Voter Education Programme (VEP) in the study were not so different from the contents of NTA's *Political update* program prior to the 2019 general elections in Nigeria.

This finding supports a study on the role of broadcast media as an instrument of change during the 2015 electioneering campaign in Nigeria (Blaikie, 2015). The study reported that the greatest challenge of the Nigerian media is that proprietors who are mostly persons with



political interests discourage them from adhering to the fundamental principles of balance and objectivity in reportage (Bryman, Liao & Lewis-Beck, 2012). Similarly, the finding is in line with a study conducted in Mexico where it was found that political advertisements on both radio and TV have a positive, significant and sizable effect on voting intentions (Akpan & Onyebuchi, 2012). In summary, findings from the study revealed that NTA's *Political update* program extensively featured voters education contents prior to the 2019 General Election in Nigeria. With respect to listeners' level of education on the voters' education contents on the station, the findings revealed that voters' education contents on NTA had nothing to do with listeners' level of education. This could be as a result of code mixing language used in disseminating information on voters' education contents on NTA. This finding is in agreement with the work, who also found that voters' education had no significant effect on electorates. The finding of this study also supports the findings who found no significant differences between those with higher education and those with lower education. However, the finding of this study is in contrast with the findings who reported that voting rates were strongly related to combinations of household income and educational attainment (Blaikie, 2015).

Finding further revealed that there was a significant relationship in the perception of features of voters' education contents of NTA's *Political update* program. Finding further implies that there was an overall significant relationship in the perception of electorates on voters' education contents in the two stations. This finding aligns with a related study on voter education (Blaikie 2015). The study revealed that there was a significant impact of voters' participation arising from their exposure to NTA's *Political update* program 2019 general elections in Nigeria. Finding implied that more voters participated in 2019 general elections in Nigeria and this could be as a result of their exposure to NTA's *Political update* program prior to general elections in Nigeria, Hence, this had increased the voting patterns.

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