



BETWEEN SIX AND HALF A DOZEN: A COMPARATIVE FUNCTIONAL ANALYSIS OF TELEVISED POLITICAL ADVERTISEMENTS OF INCUMBENT VERSUS CHALLENGER IN THE 2019 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION CAMPAIGNS IN NIGERIA

Fidelis Ndidiamaka Asogwa

Department of Mass Communication, Faculty of Arts, University of Nigeria, Nsukka.

Email: gykhusinta@gmail.com

Cite this article:

Fidelis Ndidiamaka Asogwa (2025), Between Six and Half a Dozen: A Comparative Functional Analysis of Televised Political Advertisements of Incumbent Versus Challenger in the 2019 Presidential Election Campaigns in Nigeria. British Journal of Mass Communication and Media Research 5(1), 110-124. DOI: 10.52589/BJMCMR-WYZS5RXH

Manuscript History

Received: 18 May 2024

Accepted: 31 Jul 2024

Published: 27 Mar 2025

Copyright © 2025 The Author(s). This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0), which permits anyone to share, use, reproduce and redistribute in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.

ABSTRACT: *This study is a functional analysis of APC, and PDP political advertisements in the 2019 presidential election in Nigeria. The study adopted a descriptive qualitative design with data collected from purposively selected NTA, AIT, TVC, and Channels which were the four major television networks in Nigeria in 2019. A population of 58 political advertisements were generated from the four television networks. The Australian online sample size calculator was used to determine the sample size of 50, at 95% CL and 0.5 CI. Twenty five political advertisements were randomly selected from APC, and PDP and randomly assigned to two graduate coders without political affiliation through number picks. Coder A coded 13 APC and 12 PDP while coder B coded 12 APC and 13 PDP political advertisements respectively. The coders achieved inter-coder reliability co-efficient of .80 on topic, and .82 on function respectively on Cohen's kappa. Findings revealed the dominance of acclaims over attacks for both the incumbent (APC) and the challenger (PDP) contrary to previous findings. Despite this, PDP as the challenger still acclaimed less, attacked more, and defended less while APC, as the incumbent, acclaimed more, attacked less, and defended more. Topical analysis showed both APC, and PDP were more focused on image than policy contrary to previous findings for both incumbents and challengers which validates the development gap hypothesis. The study was anchored on the Functional Analysis Theory of Political Campaign Discuss (FATPCD).*

KEYWORDS: Advertisement, Functions, Acclaims, Attacks, Defenses.



INTRODUCTION

The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) registered 91 political parties for the 2019 presidential election with 73 of them fielding presidential candidates. However, the contest was effectively between the All Progressives Congress (APC) (incumbent) and the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) (challenger). The other 71 presidential candidates amounted to mere political distraction for the two leading candidates. Muhammadu Buhari was the incumbent president and the presidential candidate of APC while Atiku Abubakar was the challenger and the presidential candidate of PDP. The presidential campaign leading to the election was fierce, a clear two-horse race contest that produced a lot of political drama and suspense, and was prosecuted with many memorable political advertisements on national television networks from both the incumbent and the challenger. This study makes a comparative analysis of the incumbent and the challenger during the campaigns by examining the topics, and the functions of their political advertisements.

Nigeria has a peculiar political campaign culture that verges on three months of frenzy and extravagant display of cultural activities, and a national air of great expectations. Its political campaigns are structured mainly as entertainment, with music, illustrative songs and dance, and a period of uncommon goodwill marked by sharing of gifts for political patronage, otherwise euphemistically termed “stomach infrastructure” for assorted rented crowds. In Nigeria, the political stature of a candidate and his party is measured by the crowd they can mobilize for political gatherings. It has become a contest of my crowd is bigger than yours. It is a period that offers “supporters” self-importance as the candidates jostle to control the dominant narrative while supporters demand even more juice while waiting to be rented by the next candidate. These practices are common to both incumbents and challengers making distinguishability almost impossible.

Substantial part of modern political campaigns is delivered through the media, especially television, as the media have become fundamental to how presidential candidates structure their message strategies (Mazoleni & Shultz, 1999). Because of this, the media are a veritable resource in which an analysis of the candidates can be made. The principal medium for political marketing is television. It attracts presidential candidates intuitively because of its audio-visual capabilities and its suitability for emotional appeals through which the image of the candidates are creatively managed for purposes of winning election. Thus, news coverage on television, political debates, news conferences, project commissioning, and political advertisements are all strategic media maneuvers by presidential candidates to influence the electorate and gain political advantage over their opponents.



REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Wills (1995) argues that televised political advertisements have become vital strategic tools unmatched in their ability to communicate a candidate's message and have also become valuable resources in which to evaluate a candidate's strategy. Thus, political advertisements reveal the strategic behavior of candidates for elections (Batta, Batta, & Mboho, 2015). They have become an important mechanism presidential candidates use to reach the public directly unfiltered (Geer, 2006; Just *et al.*, 1996). They are also the most used and most viewed of all available forms of political communication (Jamieson, 1996). The importance of television in political campaigns is underlined by the fact that a single, 30 minute political advertisement can accomplish far greater results than several political rallies or town hall meetings (Lau & Rovner, 2009). The rise of televised political advertisements has been accelerated by declining party identification (Trent & Friedenberg, 2008) among the citizens, especially among the youth demographics who are more critical to political actors and institutions (Stromback & Esser, 2014). In addition, there is a wane of the strength and influence of political parties especially on the younger generation whose population is higher than the old generation forcing political parties and their presidential candidates to focus more on political advertisements as strategic to winning. The loss of party influence has resulted in the rise of independent identifiers who are more readily available to the effects of televised political advertisements (Veer, Becirovic & Martin, 2010). Wooing the younger generation voters is becoming more difficult for political parties through the traditional party mobilization structures, rather political parties are employing commercial advertising strategies to woo them. This type of political campaigning suits emerging democracies where the political parties lack effective communication departments (Voltmar, 2006). Also, according to Holtz-Bacha (2006), new democracies are less resistant to the adoption of modern campaigning techniques. Thus, political advertising in new democracies such as Nigeria manifest many of the features of Americanised, modern political campaign practices. These features are operationalised by Lahi (2015) as less focused on party identity, less issue oriented, and targeting more the leader image. This operationalisation was based on the five characteristics of modern political campaigns provided by Swanson and Manchini (1996) which include: personalisation of politics, scientification of the political scene, detachment of parties from citizens, independent communication structure, and making the political landscape more spectacular.

According to Fowler and Rideout (2014), the contents of political advertisements of political parties, whether character or policy advertisements, are more often than not negative, and designed to run down the opposing candidate of the other party. The predominant theme is negativity (Rideout & Franz, 2011) for both incumbents and challengers. Challengers favour this strategy, especially in elections where the race is too close to call (Lau & Pomper, 2004). Thus, Motta and Fowler (2016) argue that negativity is the dominant form of political advertisements. This is supported by the findings of Benoit, Pier, and Blaney (1997) and West (1997). This appears to be the case in Nigeria too. According to the Commonwealth Observation Group (COG), the campaign focus of APC and PDP in 2015 and 2019 was predominantly negative and dwelt on the personality of the candidates rather than issues. (COG, 2019). Comparatively, Onyebadi (2019) found that in the 2015 presidential campaigns, APC/Buhari produced more negative political commercials meant for tarnishing the competitor than the ones that enhanced its own candidate. Also in the 2015 presidential election campaigns, Aririguzo (2019) concluded that Buhari/APC produced more "attack and negative" commercials compared to PDP/Goodluck. This negativity is common to both policy, and image



advertisements by both incumbents and challengers. Other researchers such as Benoit (2007), and Kaid and Johnston (2000), found more claims than attacks in presidential campaign advertisements. There is, however, a general consensus that modern electoral campaigns in democratic societies, especially at presidential level, have adapted commercial advertising practices to political advertisements resulting in the commodification of the candidates, increased negativity, segregation of the electorate, movie-style dramatization of politics, and general growth in the volume of political advertisements for prosecuting elections.

In terms of the policy/image dichotomy, Kaid and Johnston (2006) found that policy dominates in developed democracies such as the United States, and France while image dominates in developing democracies such as Turkey, and Korea.

Statement of The Problem

Despite the strategic role of televised political advertisements in political campaigns especially in presidential elections, and the huge media budget expended on it during political campaigns, Nigerian scholars have focused more attention on print political advertisement rather than television. Recent examples include Tejumaiye, Simon and Obia (2018), Olujide, Adeyemi and Gbadeyan (2011), Udeze and Akpan (2013), Owuamalam (2014), Alawode and Adesanya (2016), and Batta, Batta and Mboho (2015). A few attempts on televised political advertisements in Nigeria have either been limited by scope or by sample size. These include Aririguzo (2019), Owuamalam (2015), and Ojiekwe (2016). There is yet no functional analysis of APC and PDP political advertisements on television for the 2019 presidential election in Nigeria, hence the need for this study. Thus there are evident empirical gaps in Nigeria in the study of televised political advertisements as strategic instruments of political contests.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is anchored on the Functional Analysis Theory of Political Campaign Discourse (FATPCD) articulated by Benoit, Pier, and Blaney (1997), Benoit, Blaney and Pier (1998), and Benoit, Pier and Blaney (2017). This theory was specifically developed for the study of political communications in their different forms. According to Benoit (2017: 10) the “theory was developed for several reasons, one of which is that far too much research into the nature (content) of election campaign messages is atheoretical”. For this reason, FATPCD “articulates assumptions about election discourse and offers several predictions about the content of such messages”. Apart from the above, the theory also makes it possible to systematically analyze other forms of political campaign messages such as announcement speeches, televised debates, acceptance addresses, and even candidate webpages. The theory has gained wide acceptance and has been adopted by many researchers in political communication, for example, Nai and Walter (2015), Benoit and Sheafer (2006), and Alqaseer (2013). It is also one of the most used and systematically tested theories in the studies of content of television debates (Isolatus, 2011). The theory has four major pillars: (a) Voting is a comparative act since only one candidate can be voted for a particular position in the same election and voting one candidate automatically excludes the voting for another candidate for the same position. That is, one candidate must be preferable to another candidate and it is the duty of the candidates to provide the voters with reasons why they are preferable.



(b) Candidates must distinguish themselves from their opponents to create the possibility of preferability, since one candidate cannot be preferred from another if they are not distinguishable.

(c) Political campaign advertisements are the means of distinguishing one candidate from another.

(d) Political campaign messages create distinguishability and hence, preferability using three message formats or functions: claims, attacks, and defenses. The theory is also predictive. Three predictions of this theory are tested in this study to determine the campaign strategies of the incumbent and the challenger:

(1) Acclaims will be more common than attacks and attacks will be more common than defenses for both incumbents and challengers.

(2) Incumbent presidential candidates will acclaim more, and attack less, than challengers.

(3) Presidential candidates will address policy more than image in their political commercials.

Three hypotheses are proposed:

Hypothesis 1: The functions (acclaims, attacks, and defenses) of the televised political advertisements of APC (incumbent) and PDP (challenger) during the 2019 presidential election campaigns were not significantly different.

Hypothesis 2: The topic (policy) of APC, and PDP televised political advertisements during the 2019 presidential election campaigns were not significantly different.

Hypothesis 3: The topic (image) of APC, and PDP televised political advertisements during the 2019 presidential election campaigns were not significantly different.

METHODOLOGY

All the televised political advertisements of APC, and PDP were collected from the purposely selected four national television networks in Nigeria (AIT, NTA, TVC, and Channels). This yielded a total population of 58 political advertisements (APC, 27, and PDP, 31). Using the Australian National Statistical Service Online sample size calculator, a sample size of 50 at confidence level of 95%, and confidence interval of 0.05 was generated with 25 samples randomly selected from each political party for analysis. The instrument for the collection of the data was a coding sheet developed for the coding exercise. Two graduate coders without any political affiliation coded the samples using blind coding system. The samples were randomly assigned to each coder through number picks. Coder A coded 13 APC and 12 PDP while coder B coded 12 APC and 13 PDP political advertisements respectively. Content categories were functions and topics. Functions are acclaims, attacks, and defenses. Topics are policy, and image. Policy includes economy, security, infrastructure, restructuring, energy/power, corruption/anti-corruption, social development, and external affairs. Policy could be past deeds (past record in office), future plans (promises), and general goal (desirable ideals). Image metrics are integrity, competence, capacity, compassion, decisiveness,



patriotism, equity, tolerance, and knowledge. The units of analysis are words, sentences, and themes. These three levels ensure that a high level of accuracy is achieved in coding the samples as they moderate the risk of binary coding when individual political advertisement is used as a unit of analysis. Separate inter-coder reliability scores were generated for function (.82), and topic (.80) on Cohen's *kappa*.

FINDINGS

Data from the study reveal that Nigerian political advertisements are largely multipurpose in structure containing different functions and topics for both the incumbent and the challenger. For example, 24% of APC political advertisements have both acclaims and attacks while 12% have all the functions (acclaims, attacks, and defenses), and 64% combine both policy, and image mentions. It was the same for PDP as 44% have both accusations and attacks while 76% have policy, and image mentions. The average length of APC political advertisements was 74.32 seconds while that of the PDP was 78.76 seconds. The total duration of APC political advertisements was 1858 seconds while PDP was 1969 seconds. For the incumbent (APC), its political advertisements were mostly acclaims (86.32%) which made up 43.49% of the total duration. Only 8.96% were attacks which took 8.13% of the total duration while defenses were 4.72% with a total duration of 2.05%. The average time allocation for the three functions was markedly different. For example, on average, APC spent 4.42 seconds on every acclaim, 7.95 seconds on every attack, and 3.8 seconds on every defense of its position. Again, findings from the APC political advertisements reveal that Nigerian presidential candidates hardly say any tangible thing positive or negative. Only 53.66% of the available time was utilized by APC in communicating substantive issues while 46.34% was fillers. And out of this number, the candidate never spoke directly to the camera relying almost exclusively on voice overs.

The challenger (PDP) followed the same pattern as the incumbent (APC) with acclaims (76.15%), being far higher than attacks (23.85%), and zero defenses. It is clear from the findings that the two political parties were focused on positive communication even when they actually communicated very little in substance. Thus, the tone of the incumbent and the challenger were largely positive with a combined average acclaim of 81.24%. Although PDP political advertisements were largely positive in tone, it still attacked more than APC (23.85%). As already noted, the political parties use a lot of fillers - music, dance, songs, and still photos - without actually saying anything substantive. For the PDP, it only used 45.66% of its entire time communicating substantively while 54.34% was spent on fillers. There was little disparity between the two political parties in terms of the average time spent acclaiming or attacking. For the PDP, it spent 4.43 seconds per acclaim and 3.15 seconds for attacks.

In summary, our data agree with the first two predictions of FATPCD: *(1) Acclaims will be more common than attacks and attacks will be more common than defenses for both incumbents and challengers.* Thus for the first prediction, APC's claims were more common (86.32%) than its attacks (8.96%) and its attacks were more common than its defenses (4.72%). Also, PDP's claims were more common (76.15%) than its attacks (23.85%) and attacks were more common than its defenses (0%).

And *(2) Incumbent presidential candidates will acclaim more, and attack less, than challengers.* Thus, APC acclaimed more (86.32%), than PDP (76.15%); attacked less (8.96%), than PDP (23.85%); and defended more (4.72%), than PDP (0%).



HYPOTHESIS 1:

Table 1: Summary of APC and PDP Televised Political Advertisements

Party	Acclaims	Attacks	Defenses	Total
APC	183 (172.07)	19 (35.00)	10 (4.93)	212
PDP	166 (176.93)	52 (36.00)	0 (5.01)	218
Total	349	71	10	430

$$\chi^2 = \frac{(183 - 172.07)^2}{172.07} + \frac{(19 - 35)^2}{35} + \frac{(10 - 4.93)^2}{4.93} + \frac{(166 - 176.93)^2}{176.93} + \frac{(52 - 36)^2}{36} + \frac{(0 - 5.10)^2}{5.10}$$

$$\chi^2_{cal}=26.1085$$

$$\chi^2_2(0.05) = 5.991$$

Since 26.1085 > 5.991, null hypothesis is rejected which indicates a significant difference in the functions of the televised political advertisements of the incumbent (APC) and the challenger (PDP) in the 2019 presidential campaign.

As the incumbent, APC only needed to present its performance in office since 2015 to the electorate. Thus, 84% of its political advertisements contained policy messages. Only four advertisements did not dwell at all on policy issues: “Sai Buhari”, “Vote Buhari-Osibanjo Next Level”, “The Journey to the Next Level”, and “We Believe II”. The three focal points of APC political advertisements in order of magnitude were infrastructure, economy, and security. They constituted 51.81% of the policy focus of the party. The three items, together with fighting against corruption, were the pillars of its manifesto. However, corruption/anti-corruption came a joint fifth in the political advertisements with energy, and agriculture. It is evident that APC followed the provisions in its manifesto in crafting its policy messages during the campaigns. The fight against corruption was not considered a success since 2015 when the party assumed power at the center though it is a major pillar of its manifesto. Its joint fifth placing (8.43%) quantitatively, therefore, is not surprising. The first three issues, infrastructure (19.28%), economy (16.87%), and security (15.66%) were generally considered to have recorded more relative success than the fight against corruption and this was validated by their emphasis in the advertisements. They also appeared in 64%, 56%, and 52% of all APC advertisements. The relative lack of attention to health (4.82%) and education (6.02%) by the government of APC is validated by their de-emphasis in the political advertisements of the party. The party’s success in social interventions through the N-Power programme, Trader Moni, Market Moni, etc. is reflected in their prominence (12.05%) and mentioned by 40% of all APC advertisements, figures far higher than education and health combined.

As the challenger, PDP only had to distinguish itself from APC and provide alternatives to the electorate. To do this, PDP focused in areas where APC also focused. These include security (60%), economy (68%), infrastructure (24%), social interventions (24%), and restructuring (16%). This is logical since the challenger cannot counter the incumbent where no claim has been made. The downside of this strategy was that the two leading candidates sometimes appeared to have so much in common that they were indistinguishable. There is, however, one



area where PDP did not follow the footsteps of APC – anti-corruption crusade (4.92%) – and this was logical as the PDP candidate had battled to extricate himself from the accusation of corruption since 2007. While APC had zero mention of restructuring in its political advertisements, PDP was focused on the idea, both in its manifesto and in its advertisements. Both APC, and PDP had no mention of foreign policy, the only metric with zero mention. It is clear from the data that the policy thrust of both candidates and their political parties are more similar than different.

Policy has three forms: past deeds (past public record), future plans (promises for the future), and general goals (desirable public good). As expected, APC focused on past deeds, with security (22.46%), economy (20.29%), infrastructure (15.94%), agriculture (12.32%), and social intervention (12.32%) highlighted. Thus, past deeds constituted 76.67%, future plans (20.56%), and general goals (2.78%) of its policy advertisements with acclaims (78.99%), and attacks (21.01%). Also as expected of a challenger, majority of the policy propositions of the PDP was in the future plan category. Its three categories of policy consisted of future plans (58.95%), past deeds (28.42%), and general goals (12.63%). In past deeds, its three top areas were economy (37.04%), security (18.52%), and fight against corruption (11.11%). As expected for a challenger, acclaims was 32.14% in past deeds while attacks were 67.86%. In terms of duration, future plans accounted for 58.94% of the policy focus of PDP followed by past deeds (27.29%), and general goals (13.77%). There was 100% acclaim in future plans while the general goal was 91.67% acclaim and 8.33% attacks. In summary, PDP policy data show a typical challenger situation – focus on future plans, and general goals and less so on past deeds - the opposite is also the case for APC as the incumbent. As already shown, PDP's attention to past deeds was mostly attacks on the performance of the APC especially on security, economy, and infrastructure, while acclaiming itself on its past economic performance (66.67%). Its data on future plans, and general goals did not bother to attack the APC at all. This is not surprising as future plans, and general goals are just propositions for the future and the desire for the ideal and much thought is not given to them in Nigeria.

Sectorally, security, economy, infrastructure, agriculture, and social intervention (poverty alleviation) were major concerns of both APC and PDP in the 2019 campaigns. This was clearly reflected in advertisements. These sectors featured prominently for APC in terms of past deeds where it made its biggest claims for itself and where it also attacked PDP the most. For example, in security under past deeds, 48.39% of its messages were attacks against the PDP. The other sectors with significant attacks under past deeds include the economy (7.14%), infrastructure (22.73%), and agriculture (11.76%). The functions for future plans and general goals were 100% acclaims. Its future plans followed the same policy areas in past deeds except that infrastructure was given priority over security. Thus, infrastructure constituted 32.43% of APC messages in future plans with the economy coming second with 21.62%. This reflects the focus of APC on infrastructure since 2015 especially in the areas of road construction and railways. Others are agriculture (10.81%), security (8.11%), and social intervention (8.11%). Under general goals, infrastructure again was the top priority with 60% of the messages while the economy (20%), and anti-corruption fight (20%), made up the rest. In all the sectors examined, APC did not make any defense of its position(s).

Overall, APC policy focus, in terms of time allocation, concentrated on infrastructure (8.40%), and security (7.86%). Other variables with significant durations are social intervention (4.60%), and economy (3.18%). These four areas also constituted the bulk of its acclaims. Overall, its biggest acclaims were made in the area of the economy (23.33%), infrastructure



(21.33%), social intervention (13.33%), security (12.67%), and agriculture (12.67%). These sectors also attracted the highest attacks from APC against PDP with security (50%), infrastructure (16.67%), agriculture (6.67%), and economy (6.67%). The logic of these results is clear - where the candidate focuses more is also where he acclaims more (for himself and his party), and also attacks more (against his challenger and his party). The candidates feel reasonably sure that it is in these areas of concentration that their strengths lie and his challenger's weaknesses are more pronounced.

The functions of the PDP political advertisements on policy were not markedly different from the APC. For example, its acclaims were spread mainly on the same sectors as that of the APC with economy (22.95%), security (19.67%), and infrastructure (16.39%). The three sectors also led in terms of attacks from PDP against APC. The party's highest attacks against APC were in economy (34.29%), security (20%), infrastructure (20%), and anti-corruption/corruption (9.09%). The importance of these variables to the political parties is indicated by the relative time allocation to each. For example, for the PDP, security, economy, and infrastructure are at the forefront of the party's campaign in 2019. They attracted the highest time allocations, the highest amount of acclaims, and the highest amount of attacks. For time allocation, economy (4.32%), security (2.79%), and infrastructure (1.68%) ranked highest. As the challenger in the contest, PDP's advertisements were expected to be largely negative but this was not the case. Attacks were not liberally used by the challenger as a major campaign strategy.

The second leg of topic in political communication is image, which are non-policy political messages focusing principally on the personality, qualifications, and experiences that make them suitable or unsuitable for the high public office of the president. It is a strategic decision by the candidates' campaign management team how image messages are used. Image metrics elicited little negativity from APC. Thus, of the 12 image variables measured, it only used seven and mostly in a positive, self-acclaiming manner. It attacked PDP in only two of the variables – integrity, and competence – which together lasted for approximately 19.84% of the total duration of image messages of the party. It had only a passing mention of the other variables such as decisiveness, and leadership. The image data of APC reflected the historical characterisation of its presidential candidate as a man of high integrity and moral rectitude (19.87%), a decisive personality (3.97%), and a courageous leader (2.65%). There was high reference to the theme of competence in the advertisements (60.26%) out of which 86.81% were acclaims and 11.58% were attacks. The data also show APC's consistent attacks on the PDP candidate as an integrity-deficit figure, a burden historically associated with the candidate of the PDP since 2007. This image metric generated the highest level of attacks (56.25%) from the APC against the PDP candidate. There was almost a total absence of the theme of vision (0.66%) among the variables measured in the APC advertisements which appears like a contradiction to the "Next Level" slogan that the party had articulated excellently throughout the campaigns. Next level was supposedly a vision for a great developmental leap which the party, through its candidate, was going to implement to make Nigeria achieve its dreams. But the absence of the theme of vision in the advertisements seems to belie the next level idea. In summary, the policy versus image divide of the APC campaign shows that policy messages constituted 43.42% of its campaign while 56.58% was on image of the candidates. In terms of duration, its image mentions outstripped that of PDP by 255.60% while a similar figure (210.90%) was observed in its policy mentions.

The image data of PDP are also largely acclaims. It also mentioned almost all the variables in the image metrics except decisiveness, and tolerance. The most mentioned variables are



competence (25.33%), capacity (12%), experience (12%), patriotism (10.67%), and vision (10.67%). The PDP candidate consistently emphasized his competence, and capacity during the campaigns, devoting 25.33% and 12% to the two metrics respectively. He coupled these with his 'vision' (10.67%) for Nigeria. He only briefly attacked APC candidates on integrity (50%) and patriotism (50%) which constituted eight percent and 10.67% of the total image mentions respectively. Policy mentions made up 48.90% of PDP political advertisements while its image mentions was 51.10%.

The policy - image dichotomy of APC (incumbent) and its candidate focused more on image (56.58%) than on policy (43.42%) while PDP (challenger) also focused more on image (51.1%) than on policy (48.9%). This contradicts the third prediction of FATPCD that *Presidential candidates will address policy more than image in their political commercials*.

HYPOTHESIS 2:

Table 2: Policy Data of APC and PDP

Party	SE	EC	IN	RE	EN	CO	ED	HE	AG	SI	FO	Total
APC	13 (16.25)	14 (17.99)	16 (12.77)	0 (2.32)	7 (5.22)	7 (5.80)	5 (4.64)	4 (2.90)	7 (5.80)	10 (9.29)	0 (0)	83
PDP	15 (11.75)	17 (13.01)	6 (9.23)	4 (1.68)	2 (3.78)	3 (4.20)	3 (3.36)	1 (2.10)	3 (4.20)	6 (6.71)	0 (0)	60
Total	28	31	22	4	9	10	8	5	10	16	0	143

Key:

= SE- Security EC- Economy IN- Infrastructure RE – Restructuring EN – Energy CO – Anti-corruption

ED- Education HE – Health AG – Agriculture SI –Social Intervention
FO – Foreign Affairs

$$\chi^2 = \frac{(13 - 16.25)^2}{16.25} + \frac{(14 - 17.99)^2}{17.99} + \frac{(16 - 12.77)^2}{12.77} + \frac{(0 - 2.32)^2}{2.32} + \frac{(7 - 5.22)^2}{5.22} + \frac{(7 - 5.80)^2}{5.80} + \frac{(5 - 4.64)^2}{4.64} + \frac{(4 - 2.90)^2}{2.90} + \frac{(7 - 5.80)^2}{5.80} + \frac{(10 - 9.29)^2}{9.29} + \frac{(0 - 0)^2}{0} + \frac{(15 - 11.75)^2}{11.75} + \frac{(17 - 13.01)^2}{13.01} + \frac{(6 - 9.23)^2}{9.23} + \frac{(4 - 1.68)^2}{1.68} + \frac{(2 - 3.78)^2}{3.78} + \frac{(3 - 4.20)^2}{4.20} + \frac{(3 - 3.36)^2}{3.36} + \frac{(1 - 2.10)^2}{2.10} + \frac{(3 - 4.20)^2}{4.20} + \frac{(6 - 6.71)^2}{6.71} + \frac{(0 - 0)^2}{0}$$

$$\chi^2_{cal} = 13.9455$$

$$\chi^2_{10}(0.05) = 18.307$$

Since $13.9455 < 18.307$, the null hypothesis is accepted indicating no significant difference between the incumbent (APC) and the challenger (PDP) on policy in their televised political advertisements during the 2019 presidential campaign.

**YPOTHESIS 3:****Table 3: Image Data of APC and PDP**

Party	INT	COM1	CAP	EXP	COM2	DEC	PAT	EQU	TOL	KNO	LEA	VIS	Total
APC	30 (23.09)	91 (70.53)	0 (5.77)	0 (5.77)	1 (1.92)	6 (3.85)	1 (5.77)	0 (1.92)	0 (0)	0 (3.85)	4 (5.77)	1 (5.77)	75
PDP	6 (12.92)	19 (39.47)	9 (3.23)	9 (3.23)	2 (1.08)	0 (2.15)	8 (3.23)	3 (1.08)	0 (0)	6 (2.15)	5 (3.23)	8 (3.23)	209
Total	36	110	9	9	3	6	9	3	0	6	9	9	134

Key:

INT- Integrity COM 1- Competence CAP – Capacity EXP- Experience COM 2 – Compassion DEC- Decisiveness

PAT- Patriotism EQU – Equity TOL – Tolerance KNO - Knowledge LEA - Leadership VIS – Vision

$$\chi^2 = \frac{(30 - 23.09)^2}{23.09} + \frac{(91 - 70.53)^2}{70.53} + \frac{(0 - 5.77)^2}{5.77} + \frac{(0 - 5.77)^2}{5.77} + \frac{(1 - 1.92)^2}{1.92} + \frac{(6 - 3.85)^2}{3.85} + \frac{(1 - 5.77)^2}{5.77} + \frac{(0 - 1.92)^2}{1.92} + \frac{(0 - 0)^2}{0} + \frac{(0 - 3.85)^2}{3.85} + \frac{(4 - 5.77)^2}{5.77} + \frac{(1 - 5.77)^2}{5.77} + \frac{(6 - 12.92)^2}{12.92} + \frac{(19 - 39.47)^2}{39.47} + \frac{(9 - 3.23)^2}{3.23} + \frac{(9 - 3.23)^2}{3.23} + \frac{(2 - 1.08)^2}{1.08} + \frac{(0 - 2.15)^2}{2.15} + \frac{(8 - 3.23)^2}{3.23} + \frac{(3 - 1.08)^2}{1.08} + \frac{(0 - 0)^2}{0} + \frac{(6 - 2.15)^2}{2.15} + \frac{(5 - 3.23)^2}{3.23} + \frac{(8 - 3.23)^2}{3.23}$$

$$\chi^2_{cal}=95.6845$$

$$\chi^2_{11}(0.05) = 19.675$$

Since $95.6845 > 19.675$, the null hypothesis that the topics of APC and PDP on image during the 2019 presidential campaigns were not significantly different is rejected. There was a significant difference in the topics of APC and PDP on image during the 2019 presidential campaign.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The dominance of acclaim for both the incumbent and the challenger was refreshing and a departure from the previous conclusions of Rideout and Franz (2011), Fowler and Rideout (2014), Nwachukwu (2015), Motta and Fowler (2019), and Mba, Nwangwu and Ugwu (2019), that attack political advertisements dominate presidential campaigns. These conclusions were not validated by the empirical data of this study. Our findings align with the findings of Benoit (2007), and Kaid and Johnston (2000), who found more acclaims than attacks in presidential campaign advertisements. This is despite the fact that the 2019 presidential contest between APC and PDP was a very tight one, a clear two-horse race which previous studies such as Kahn



and Kenny (2004), Walter (2014), and Papp and Patkos (2019) concluded breeds negativity. The combined average negativity between APC and PDP was a mere 18.76%.

The political advertisements of both APC and PDP had widespread policy messages. For example, 64% and 76% of APC and PDP political advertisements contained policy messages; despite this, both APC and PDP ended up with more image mentions than policy. This contradicts the findings of Benoit (2007; 2014), Scammell and Langer (2006), and Kaid and Gagnere (2006) that most candidates stress policy over image in their political advertisements on television. Our findings support the conclusion of Lahi (2015) that modern political campaigns are less focused on issues, more focused on leader image, and less on party identity. Our findings validate the conclusion of Kaid and Holtz-Bacha (2006) that political campaigns in developing democracies are more focused on image than on policy. Thus, the contention that political campaigns in Nigeria are largely devoid of issues, at least, in reference to the 2019 presidential campaigns, is supported by the data evidence of this study. Overall, our findings have implications for the political future of developing democracies, especially Nigeria as it concerns a political system that focuses more on entertainment and personal issues than on serious state matters built on well thought out policy strategies to move the country forward. Our findings support the development gap hypothesis of Kaid (2006) that in developed democracies, policy takes preeminence while in developing democracies, image takes preeminence. Yet developing democracies are mired in economic, social, and political problems which require serious policy measures yet presidential candidates, both incumbent and challenger, are more focused on image which end up compounding delicate national problems. Again, the near indistinguishability of the incumbent and the challenger in terms of their messages offers the electorate little political alternative making hope for a new political order in the future futile.

CONCLUSION

The 2019 televised political advertisements of APC and PDP were largely positive, though evidently less focused on policy than the context of the social and economic conditions of Nigeria required at the time. The two political parties and their presidential candidates focused in the same areas making distinguishability difficult for the electorate.



REFERENCES

- Alawode, S. O., & Adesanya, O. O. (2016). Content analysis of 2015 election advertisements in selected national dailies of Nigeria. *European Scientific Journal* 12(5).234-59. doi:10.19044/esj.2016.v12n5p234
- Alqaseer, J. (2013). *Political advertising in Kuwait – A functional discourse analysis*. (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from <https://scholarcommon.sc.edu/etd/1492>
- Aririguzoh, S.A. (2019). Music, political messaging, and Nigeria's 2015 presidential election. *Advances in Religious and Cultural Studies*. 261- 282. doi:10.4018/978-1-5225-7295-4.ch014
- Batta, N. W., Batta, H., & Mboho, M. (2015). Political advertising and electioneering in Nigeria: An analysis of 2015 general election newspaper advertisements. *European Journal of Business and Management* 7(35), 81 – 89.
- Benoit, W. L. (2007). *Communication in political campaigns*. New York: Peter Lang.
- Benoit, W. L. (2017). Meta-analysis of research on the functional theory of political campaign discourse. *Speaker & Gavel*, 54(1), 7 – 50.
- Benoit, W. L. (2014). *A Functional Analysis of Political Television Advertisements*. (2nd ed). Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.
- Benoit, W. L., Pier, P. M., & Blaney, J. R. (1997). "Sustainable development" in visual imagery: A functional approach to televised political spots: Acclaiming, attacking, and defending. *Communication Quarterly*, 45(1), 1 – 20. doi.org/10.1080/01463379709370041
- Benoit, W. L., Blaney, J. R., & Pier, P. M. (1998). *Functions of campaign '96: Acclaiming, attacking, and defending discourse*. Westport, CT: Praeger.
- Benoit, W. L., & Sheaffer, T. (2006). Functional theory and political discourse: Televised debates in Israel and the United States. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 83(2). doi.org/10.1177/107769900608300204
- Commonwealth Observation Group. (2019). *Reports of the commonwealth observation group: Nigeria general election, 23 February 2019*. Retrieved from www.commonwealth.org
- Fowler, E. F., & Ridout, T. N. (2014). Political advertising in 2014: The year of the outside group. *Forum*, 12(4), 663 – 84. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1515/for-2014-5030>
- Geer, J. G. (2006). *In Defense of negativity: Attack ads in presidential campaigns*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press.
- Holtz-Bacha, Ch. (2006). Political campaign communication. Conditional convergence of modern media elections. In F. Esser & B. Pfetsch (Eds.). *Comparing Political Communication: Theories, Cases and Challenges* (pp. 213-230). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Isotalus, P. (2011). Analysing presidential debates: Functional theory and Finnish political communication culture. *Nordicom Review*, 32(1), 31 – 43.
- Jamieson, K. H. (1996). *Packaging the Presidency* (3rd ed.). Cambridge: Oxford University Press.
- Just, M., Crigler, A., Alger, D., Cook, T., Kern, M., & West, D. (1996). *Crosstalk*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Kahn, K., & Kenney, P. J. (2004). *No holds barred: Negativity in U.S. senate campaigns*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall.
- Kaid, L. L., & Gagnere, N. (2006). Election broadcasts in France. In L. L. Kaid & C. Holtz-Bacha (Eds.). *The SAGE handbook of political advertising* (pp. 83-96). Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE Publications.



- Kaid, L. L., & Holtz-Bacha, C. (2006). Television advertising and democratic systems around the world. In L. L. Kaid & C. Holtz-Bacha (Eds.). *The SAGE handbook of political advertising* (pp. 445-457). Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE Publications.
- Kaid, L. L., & Johnston, A. (2001). *Videostyle in presidential campaigns: Style and content of televised political advertising*. Westport, CT: Praeger
- Lahi, R. (2015). Political advertising: How new and old democracies make use of it. *European Journal of Research in Social Sciences*, 3(6), 13- 33.
Retrieved from www.idpublications.org
- Lau, R. R., & Pomper, G. (2004). *Negative campaigning: An analysis of U.S. Senate elections*. Lanham, MD: Rowan and Littlefield.
- Lau, R. R. & Rovner, I. B., (2009). Negative campaigning. *Annual Review of Political Science*.12:285 – 306. *Doi:10.1146/annurev.polisci.10.071905.101448*
- Mbah, P. O., Nwangwu, C., & Ugwu, S. C (2019). Contentious elections, political exclusion, and challenges of national integration in Nigeria. *Cogent Social Sciences*, 5(1).
<https://doi.org/10.1080/23311886.2019.1565615>
- Motta, P. M., & Fowler F. E. (2016).The content and effect of political advertising in U.S campaigns.*Oxford Encyclopedia of Politics*.doi:10.1093/acrefore/9780190228637.013.217
- Nai, A., & Walter, A. S. (2015). The war of words: The art of negative campaigning. In A. Nai & A. S. Walter (Eds.) *New Perspectives on Negative Campaigning: Why Attack Politics Matter*. Colchester, UK: European Consortium for Political Research,3–33.
- Nwachukwu, N. (2015). The 2015 Nigerian General Elections. *Africa Spectrum*, 50 (2).73-85.
Retrieved from <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24589129>
- Ojiekwe, G. I. (2015). Political advert campaigns and voting behaviour: A study of Akinwunmi Ambode's election ad campaigns in Lagos State. *Journal of African Elections*, 15(2), 13-27. doi:10.20940/JAE/2016 v15i2a1
- Olujide, J. O., Adeyemi, S. L., & Gbadeyan, R. A. (2011). Nigerian electorates' perception of political advertising and election campaigns. *Journal of Social Science*, 27(3), 179 – 185.
- Onyebadi, U. T. (2019). Music and messaging in the African political arena. *Advances in Religious and Cultural Studies (ARCS) Book Series*. United States. IGI Global.
- Owuamalam, E. (2014). Voter perception of unique selling proposition in Nigeria's presidential political advertisement. *International Journal of International Relations, Media and Mass Communication Studies*, 1(1), 1-16. Retrieved from www.eajournals.org
- Papps, Z., & Patkos, V. (2019). The Macro-Level Driving Factors of Negative Campaigning in Europe. *International Journal of Press/Politics*, Vol. 24(1) 27–48
- Ridout, T. N., & Franz, M. M. (2011). *The persuasive power of campaign advertising*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Scammell, M., & Langer, A. I. (2006). Political advertising in the United Kingdom. In L. L. Kaid & C. Holtz-Bacha (Eds.). *The SAGE handbook of political advertising* (pp. 65-82).Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE Publications.
- Stromback, J., & Esser, F. (2014). Mediatisation of politics: Towards a theoretical framework. In F. Esser & J. Stromback (Eds.) *Mediatisation of politics: Understanding the transformation on Western democracies*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan



- Swanson, D. L., & Mancini, P. (1996). *Politics, media and modern democracy. An international study of innovations in electoral campaigning and other consequences*. Westport, CT: Praeger.
- Tejumaiye, J. A., Simon, G. I., & Obia, V. A. (2018). Political advertising in Nigeria 2015 presidential election. *Global media Journal*, 16(31), 1-11.
- Trent, J. S., & Friedenberg, R. V. (2008). *Political Campaign Communication: Principles and Practices* (6th ed.). Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- Udeze, S., & Akpan, U. (2013). The influence of political advertising on Nigerian electorate. *Journal of Communication*, 4(1), 49-55.
- Veer, E., Becirovic, L., & Martin, S. A. B. (2010). If Kate voted conservative, would you? The role of celebrity endorsement in political party advertising. *European Journal of Marketing*, 44 (3/4), 436 – 450. doi.org/10.108/03096561011020516
- Voltmer, K. (2006). The mass media and the dynamics of political communication in processes of democratization. In K. Voltmer (Ed.) *Mass Media and Political Communication in New Democracies*. London: Routledge.
- West, D. M (1997). *Air wars: Television advertising in election campaigns, 1952-1992*. (2nd ed.) Washington, DC: Congressional Quarterly.
- Wills, S. (1995). Televised political advertising as a strategic tool to positively affect a candidate's chances of winning an election. A case study: The 1994 California U.S.senate election. Televised advertising in the Micheal Huffington campaign. *Honors Project. Paper 5*. http://digitalcommons.iwu.edu/politisci_honproj/5
- Walter, A. S (2014), 'Negative campaigning in Western Europe: Similar or different', *Political Studies*, 62 (51), 42-60.