

## VOTER PERCEPTION OF UNIQUE SELLING PROPOSITION IN NIGERIA'S PRESIDENTIAL POLITICAL ADVERTISEMENTS

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**ABSTRACT:** *A problem of choice exists, where no identifiable issue separates political candidates in political advertisements. This study evaluates voters' disposition to select either Goodluck Jonathan of the PDP or Muhammadu Buhari of the APC, in the March, 2015 presidential election in Nigeria, based on voter-perception of their presented television commercials. A sample of 377 was purposively drawn from three states in South-East Nigeria, which have different political leadership. Abia State is PDP, Imo is APC while Anambra State is APGA, which has no presidential candidate from that party. It was found that voter disposition and behaviour are based on how presented political messages related to voter expectation; that the choice of a unique selling proposition in political advertisements is not a major compelling force for candidate selection at election. It means that messages which contain no specific measurable item are weak in persuading positive patronage. It shows that the electorate should know why a candidate is to be preferred to another in elections. This is the essence of unique selling proposition in political advertising.*

**KEYWORDS:** Voter-perception; unique selling proposition; political advertisement.

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### INTRODUCTION

The 1999 Nigerian constitution provided for presidential election once in every four years. It means that the tenure of an elected president shall be four years in the first instance unless where re-elected for another second and last tenure of four years. The registered political parties in Nigeria present their presidential candidates for consideration by registered voters who are expected to possess the permanent voter registration cards (PVC). The electorate is, therefore, entertained through political advertisements, which represent the **beauty contest** for voter consideration. The message content is crafted in a compelling manner designed to stimulate voter interest and disposition to vote at election. The political advertisements of Goodluck Jonathan of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and Muhammadu Buhari of the All Peoples Congress (APC), as presented to the Nigerian electorate, formed the basis for evaluating voter disposition to select a candidate in the March 28 presidential election in Nigeria.

Goodluck Jonathan is the current sitting President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. He has ruled Nigeria for nearly six years, with the legally excluded two years of the Yaradua-Jonathan era of 2007 – 2011. The death of President Yaradua gave rise to the then Vice-President, Goodluck Jonathan, being sworn-in as President. Arch. Namadi Sambo from North-Central geo-political zone was his running mate in the 2011 presidential election, which Jonathan won. Currently, Goodluck Jonathan has presented himself as a presidential candidate on the platform of the Peoples Democratic Party, (PDP), for the March 28 presidential election in 2015, with Sambo as his running mate. He has, therefore, used various political advertisements on

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television to woo positive voter disposition to elect him as Nigeria's President for the 2015-2019 tenure of office. He hails from the South-South geopolitical zone in Nigeria.

Muhammadu Buhari is the presidential candidate of the All Progressive Congress (APC). He was a former Head of State in Nigeria between 1983 and 1985, as a military General. He had attempted to regain political power at different elections in 2007, 2011 and now in 2015. He comes from the North-West geo-political zone and has Professor Osubanji who comes from the South-West geopolitical zone, as his running mate. He has also presented himself through various political advertisements on television as a strategy for attracting favourable voter disposition to elect him as Nigeria's President for 2015 – 2019 tenure of office.

The presentation of political commercials on television, from the various presidential candidates, represents political advertisements. They provide information which voters need to assess candidate's capability in satisfying their needs. Its content is an expression of candidate's objective for seeking votes from the electorate. It is when such an objective is improperly articulated that distortions in implied meaning gives rise to voter-apathy or outright rejection of a candidate, with the perceived communication defect. The implication is that political messages must be anchored around a specific issue, which explains why a candidate should be preferred to any other one in an election. It is this fulcrum in persuasive communication that is referred to as the unique selling proposition in political advertising, which markets politics (Nwosu, 2003).

The fulcrum serves as the major plank for attracting voter attention, arousing voting disposition and facilitating favourable patronage at the specified election, (Owuamalam, 2005). It is considered as a fulcrum because some other issues are expected to revolve around that major argument in a persuasive manner, as to elicit the desired predetermined impact. The unique selling proposition (USP), also known as the unique selling point (Ozoh, 2013), therefore, provides the process message which voters require as justification to vote at an election.

Often, one hears voters complain about the insipid nature of presented political commercials, particularly in respect of presidential campaigns in Nigeria. They point to the numerosity of jingles for a particular candidate, which some claim, lack character and definition. It is the flatness arising from a seemingly poor vision of the essence of political advertising as a marketing gambit that has stimulated a research interest on what should be done to arrest audience appreciation of provided content, in facilitating positive voter behaviour. This is the relevance of USP in political advertising, since it directs message consumers' thought to a raised issue and how it concerns them.

The frequent nature of elections in human societies makes this study relevant and timeless in content and context, within political constituencies across the globe. It will no doubt, contribute substantially to intellectual debates on political communication, among which political advertising is a sub-sector.

### **Statement of Problem**

What to provide in a political advertisement content so as to influence positive voter behaviour is a problem in political communication, particularly for selecting a candidate in an election. The translation of manifestoes, as public declaration of intentions, fails to generate the expected result where the provided message is not properly crafted around a specific idea. It shows that where the unique selling proposition is blurred, its implied meaning obliterates reasoning as a

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rational justification for participation in an election, like the 28<sup>th</sup> March 2015, presidential election in Nigeria.

This study, therefore, evaluates how voter-perception of political advertisements, at the presidential campaign level in Nigeria, influences their propensity to select a specific candidate at the 2015 presidential election. It is voters' perception of a presidential candidate that determines success or failure at the election.

### **Research Objective**

Three research objectives were set for this study as follows:

1. To ascertain if voters are able to differentiate Jonathan's proposal from that of Buhari in their respective political advertisements on television.
2. To find out how voters relate the proposals to their need satisfaction.
3. To understand if there is any significant relationship between the presented proposals and voter propensity for candidate selection.

### **Research Question**

Three research questions were posed to guide this study as follows:

1. Are voters able to differentiate Jonathan's proposal from that of Buhari in their respective political advertisements on television?
2. To what extent do voters relate the proposals to their need satisfaction?
3. Does any significant relationship exist between the presented proposals and voter propensity for candidate selection?

### **Research Hypothesis**

Three null hypotheses were formulated to direct the study as follows:

**H01:** Voters are not able to differentiate Jonathan's proposal from that of Buhari in their political advertisements.

**H02:** Voters do not relate the proposals to their need satisfaction.

**H03:** No significant relationship exists between the presented proposals and voter propensity for candidate selection.

## **THEORETICAL UNDERPINNING**

The affective component of advertising effect explains how voters assess political candidates, based on the message content. This is the exercise which is investigated by the study in considering the political advertisements of Goodluck Jonathan of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and Muhammadu Buhari of the All Progressive Congress in the 2015 presidential election in Nigeria. The electorate was exposed to their respective political advertisements on television. It is the unique selling proposition, as the central moving force for voter behaviour that was used to ascertain candidate selectability, based on proposal preference, as presented in their respective political advertisements.

The cognitive effect of candidate's identification and association with a specific persuasive idea was measured rather than candidate evaluation for election. It is the application of unique selling proposition as the way through which the political advertisements tend to improve voter knowledge of his political environment and awareness to the ability of the candidate to deliver on made proposal that was addressed by this study. It is believed that the impact of varying cognitive styles in the presentation of the messages in each candidate's political advertisements would determine voter preference for a candidate's proposal. It is how such a proposal relates to voter need satisfaction that stimulates choice among presented issues.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

Political advertisement set a media agenda which provides voters with what to think about (McCombs 1981). It presents information designed to create awareness and influence voter behaviour (Oskamp, 1984). It is the provided information that facilitates public agenda, (Miller, 2003) which makes voters engage in discussions as to which candidate has a better political manifestoes for a possible selection at election. It means, therefore, that the agenda setting theory, as propounded by McCombs & Shaw, 1972) and amplified through agenda building, as posited by Graber, (1984), is very apt to explain the significance of political advertisement in vote attraction to a specific candidate.

However, what the electorate does with political advertisement determines its efficacy in achieving the desired objective in the political communication. The electorate, exposes itself to a specific medium, considered relevant in providing required information that can accomplish need satisfaction, It is the reason for exposing itself to television, during the political campaign period, like that of the 2015 presidential election in Nigeria that reveals the expected gratification, likely to be derived from such media access.

The television provides information which the electorate requires to evaluate candidates in the beauty contest, symbolized by their respective proposals and how such propositions satisfy voter interest. It implies, therefore, that the uses and gratification theory (Okunna & Omenugha, 2012) substantiates what the electorate does with the media agenda, set by political advertising. Again, the uses and gratification theory rests the case for voter behaviour, based on exposure to political communication on the mass media, like the television.

## **CONCEPTUAL DISCUSSION**

Political advertising refers to messages whose content is political and presented to influence voter behaviour through its perceived persuasive impact. It harasses the guards of the electorate as it seeks endorsement from voters at election periods, like the proposed March 28, 2015 presidential election in Nigeria. It is the proposal contained in each candidate's advertisement that separates them as competitors, within the same political constituency. The offer represents bait which dangles speculations as realities within the ambit of issue management for mind persuasion, through the provided information. The message is paid for as communication, targeted at voter consideration for choosing a candidate at the election.

It means that such messages should be crafted around a "moving force", which persuades political participation in election and eventual choice of a preferred candidate. The message, therefore, is expected to be centred on a pedestal for easy appreciation and comprehension. It is the offer or proposal, made by a candidate in the political advertisement that is understood

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to mean a unique selling proposition (USP). It is the differentiating element between competitive advertisements.

The unique selling proposition, according to Ozoh (2013), “is based on an identifiable, highly competitive advantage inherent in one brand and which can be asserted over and above competition” It represents the offer which a candidate, as a brand in the political market, makes to the electorate as reason for seeking votes at election (Kaid, 1981). The message with its proposition is expected to move a large favourable consideration by voters, who relate the proposal to their respective need satisfaction within the political constituency, like the Nigerian situation in the 2015 presidential election.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The study adopted methodological triangulation (Hussey & Hussey, 1997) as its research design. The essence was to use both the quantitative method (Miller, 2002) and the qualitative method (Kothari and Garg, 2014) in obtaining an authentic and dependable result. Each method compliments the other so that a more reliable result was achieved by the study. The interview was used as the qualitative method (Best and Khan, 2006), while the survey research method (Ohaja, 2003) was adopted as the quantitative approach.

The study was conducted from 20<sup>th</sup> January, to 6<sup>th</sup> March, 2014 in the South-East geopolitical zone in Nigeria. The zone was purposively selected because none of the presidential candidates or their running mates comes from the area of study. It was therefore, believed that a study in that zone would provide an unbiased view on the subject of the research. The South-East zone is made up of Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo States. All the states receive programmes from the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) as a public station and the Channels Television, as a private television station in Nigeria. It is during the daily programming of the used stations that political commercials of both Goodluck Jonathan and Muhammadu Buhari were aired and received by viewers in the zone, hence the competence of the electorate to express their opinion on the research subject.

### **Sample**

Sample is a faithful representation of a specific population (Owuamalam, 2010). It becomes useable where a population is too large to be studied. The sum of population for states within the zone amounts to more than 12 million, based on the provided census figures of 2006, (NPC, 2006). The study purposively chose 396 as sample to represent the zone. It is believed that such a sample would be accessible within the 46 day period of the study [from 20<sup>th</sup> January to 6<sup>th</sup> March, 2015]. The multivariate study considered the used sample size as apt (Comrey & Lee, 1992).

### **Sampling Technique**

The purposive sampling technique was used in selecting three states from the South-East zone for this study. Political party control was used as the criterion for choosing any state. Abia State, controlled by PDP, same with Jonathan, was selected. Imo State, controlled by the APC, same with Buhari was also selected. The third State, Anambra, was selected because it is controlled by APGA (All Progressives Grand Alliance), which has no presidential candidate of its own. It was believed that Anambra with no party affiliation to any candidate would provide a balance to deal with party bias in expressed opinion, where any exists.

Again each state was allocated the same number of sample, based on the principle of equality of states in Nigeria as political constituencies. It meant that a sample size of 132 was allocated to each of the selected three states. Again, two cities were selected purposively from each state, based on their status as a state capital and a senatorial district headquarter. A tabular presentation of the selections were as follows:

**Table1**

| State             | Sample size | Selected cities  | Allocated Sample |
|-------------------|-------------|------------------|------------------|
| Imo<br>[APC]      | 132         | Owerri<br>Okigwe | 66<br>66         |
| Anambra<br>[APGA] | 132         | Awka<br>Onitsha  | 66<br>66         |
| Abia<br>[PDP]     | 132         | Umuahia<br>Abia  | 66<br>66         |
| <b>Total = 3</b>  | <b>396</b>  | <b>6</b>         | <b>396</b>       |

*Sample allocation to selected states in the study.*

It would be noted that the sample allocated to each of the cities in the states was equal. The study took into consideration, the principle of equality of each senatorial district in Nigeria, as each is represented by only one senator, irrespective of population of any district, hence the equal allocation of sample to the cities as district headquarters.

Also, the selected sample fell within the age range of 18 years and above, since only such persons qualify as voters in Nigeria. It is this class of television audience that were expected to be influenced by the unique selling propositions of both Jonathan and Buhari, in their respective political advertisements.

### **Tool for Data Collection**

The interview schedule was used to elicit answers from the interviewees in the cities used in this study. Ten persons purposively selected were interviewed in each of the selected cities and subjected to a set of six questions, based on the research questions as follows:

1. Have you seen political advertisements of Goodluck Jonathan and Muhammadu Buhari on NTA and Channels TV before now?
2. Can you differentiate between the advertisements provided by Jonathan and Buhari?
3. What does Jonathan offer? [State in one word].
4. What does Buhari offer? [state in one word]
5. Which offer appeals to you more?
6. Does your chosen offer make you want to select a candidate from the other at the election?

The posed questions were structured in simple language for easy comprehension by the interviewees. The essence was to ensure that the questions elicited relevant responses within few minutes of interaction between the interviewer and each of the 60 interviewees.

The tool for gathering relevant data was open-ended in type and structured to give one word answer for each question. The strategy was to make obtained responses easier to categorize and analyze. Expressed views were recorded as notes by the researcher because the use of a tape recorder would have influenced responses and response rate on such a political issue, studied within the political campaign period, prior to the March 28, 2015 election.

The survey research method, as a quantitative approach, used the structured questionnaire to obtain responses from the sample. Only closed-ended questions were used, in order to save response time. A 6-item questionnaire was designed for the purpose. Obtained data were classified and categorized for analysis. The posed questions were?

- 1) Can you differentiate between the adverts of Jonathan and that of Buhari on television?  
(a) Yes  (b) No  (c) Not sure
- 2) What does Jonathan offer Nigerians through his advertisements?  
(a) Continuity  (b) Anti-corruption  (c) Not clear
- 3) What does Buhari offer Nigerians through his advertisements?  
(a) Continuity  (b) Anti-corruption  (c) Not clear
- 4) Which of the two offers appeals to you more?  
(a) Jonathan  (b) Buhari  (c) Undecided
- 5) Does your selected offer satisfy your situation?  
a) Yes  (b) No  (c) Not sure
- 6) Does your selected offer make you want to vote for the candidate?  
(a) Yes  (b) No  (c) Not really

The tool for data collection was designed to measure the perception of voters on the use of unique selling proposition in the political advertisements of the studied presidential candidates. It was expected that the obtained data would show how USP stimulates voter interest in elections, particularly in the choice of candidate, using political advertisements as the **beauty contest**.

### **Validity and Reliability of Measuring Instrument**

Validity refers to the ability of the measuring instrument to measure what it was designed to measure (Goode & Hatt, 2000). It means that the ability of the tools for data collection to elicit responses and obtain data relevant to the study as was intended by the researcher defined its validity. The tools were, therefore, structured in simple understandable grammar, so that the intended meaning of each sentence or comment was universally understood by each respondent. This strategy was adopted for the tools used in the qualitative and quantitative methods. Also, the obtained data were checked for analysability, since it was the expected result that would enable the study to ascertain how unique selling proposition influences candidate's choice in political advertising.

Also, the used questionnaire was subjected to a pilot test in the area of study. Samples of 12 copies were used in Ifite Awka on Thursday, 5<sup>th</sup> February, 2015. The result obtained from collected data in the pre-test was recorded. On Thursday, 19<sup>th</sup> February, 2015, another set of

12 copies of the questionnaire was used in another test in the same Ifitte area in Awka. The result from this post-test was compared for similarity. It was found that the confirmed similarity showed that the measuring tool was reliable to generate the desired data, hence apt as reliable for this study.

### **Data presentation and Analysis**

Obtained data from the study were classified into mutually exclusive categories (Nwodu, 2006), and organised in tables with specific identification numbers and measuring indices. Data from the interview sessions (Onyike, 1992) were recorded as obtained and used to validate or discard results from the survey research method. It is this complimentary role of the methodological triangulation that facilitated a more reliable result from this study.

Data from the research questions were analyzed, using the simple percentage approach. The formular used was:

$$P = \frac{FR}{TN} \times 100$$

Where P = obtained percentage; FR= frequency of response and TN = total number of respondents. The strategy made comparison of indices easier. Graphical illustrations were used to express results for a better result understanding and aesthetic appeal in report appreciation.

Again the chi-square goodness of fit was used to obtain results from testing the research hypotheses in this study. The formular used was:

$$X^2 = \sum \frac{(O_1 - E_1)^2}{E_1}$$

where  $X^2$  = Calculated chi-square value;  $O_1$  = Observed frequency;  $E_1$  – Expected frequency and  $\sum$  = sum of values. This study assumed 5% or 0.05, as its margin of error and a degree of freedom of 2 (since  $df = k - 1$  or  $3 - 1 = 2$ ). It was expected that the use of chi-square as an inferential statistical method would make obtained result generalizable within the population in the area of study. Also, the study's external validity considerations of "population, settings and time" (Cook & Campbell, 1979) make the result easily generalizable within the South-East zone in Nigeria.

### **Data analysed from the Survey Method.**

Out of the 396 copies of distributed questionnaire, using the convenience sampling method (Wimmer & Dominick, 2000), in the selected cities, only 19 copies or 4.8% were invalid for this study. It was found that 12 copies were not returned while 7 copies had multiple responses. It means that the remaining 377 copies were used as valid for obtaining analysable data for this study. It was that figure that was used as 100% in the tables for analysis. The convenience sampling method was used since the electorate was highly mobile at the time of the study either to attend to their occupation or to collect their permanent voters and (PVC).

The three research questions posed in the study were answered using items in the questionnaire as follows:

**R.Q1:** Are voters able to differential Jonathan's proposal from that of Buhari in their respective political advertisement on television?

Item 1 in the questionnaire which sought to find out if respondents could differentiate between the advertisements of Jonathan and Buhari on television was used to answer the question above.

The obtained data were documented and analyzed as follows:

**Table 2:**

| <b>Responses</b> | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage</b> |
|------------------|------------------|-------------------|
| Yes              | 255              | 67.64             |
| No               | 59               | 15.65             |
| Not sure         | 63               | 16.71             |
| <b>Total</b>     | <b>377</b>       | <b>100.00</b>     |

*Voters' ability to differentiate between candidates adverts*

The result from table 2 above shows that more than two-thirds or 67.64% of the respondents were able to differentiate between the advertisements of Jonathan and that of Buhari on television, while less than one fifth or 15.65% could not. It means that more persons were able to distinguish between the candidates' advertisements even when those who held no specific opinion were also considered. It implies that those who held a positive opinion at 67.64% were more than those who held a negative opinion or no opinion at all, at a total of 32.36%. The difference of 2.09 times between the opinions shows that the voters, to a large extent, could differentiate between the candidates' advertisements.

Also, item 2 in the questionnaire was used to probe the respondent further, in order to find out if the voter as respondent was able to determine what Jonathan offered to Nigerians through his political advertisements. Data obtained were analysed as follows:

**Table 3:**

| <b>Responses</b> | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage</b> |
|------------------|------------------|-------------------|
| Continuity       | 238              | 63.13             |
| Anti-corruption  | 15               | 3.98              |
| Not clear        | 124              | 32.89             |
| <b>Total</b>     | <b>377</b>       | <b>100.00</b>     |

*Voters' perception of Jonathan's proposal in the advertisements*

The obtained result in table 3 above shows that less than two-thirds of the respondents or 63.92% believed that Jonathan's proposals hinged on continuity, while about one-third or 32.89% were not clear about the central message contained in the advertisement, unlike the 3.98% that said Jonathan intends to fight corruption. It mean that more persons understood Jonathan as desiring to continue with his performance as President of Nigeria. Continuity was, therefore, the central idea or USP in Jonathan's, advertisements.

Again, item 3 in the questionnaire was used to ascertain how voters as respondents perceived Buhari's advertisements on television. The same measuring indices, like those for Jonathan, were used for the evaluation. Data obtained were analyzed as follows:

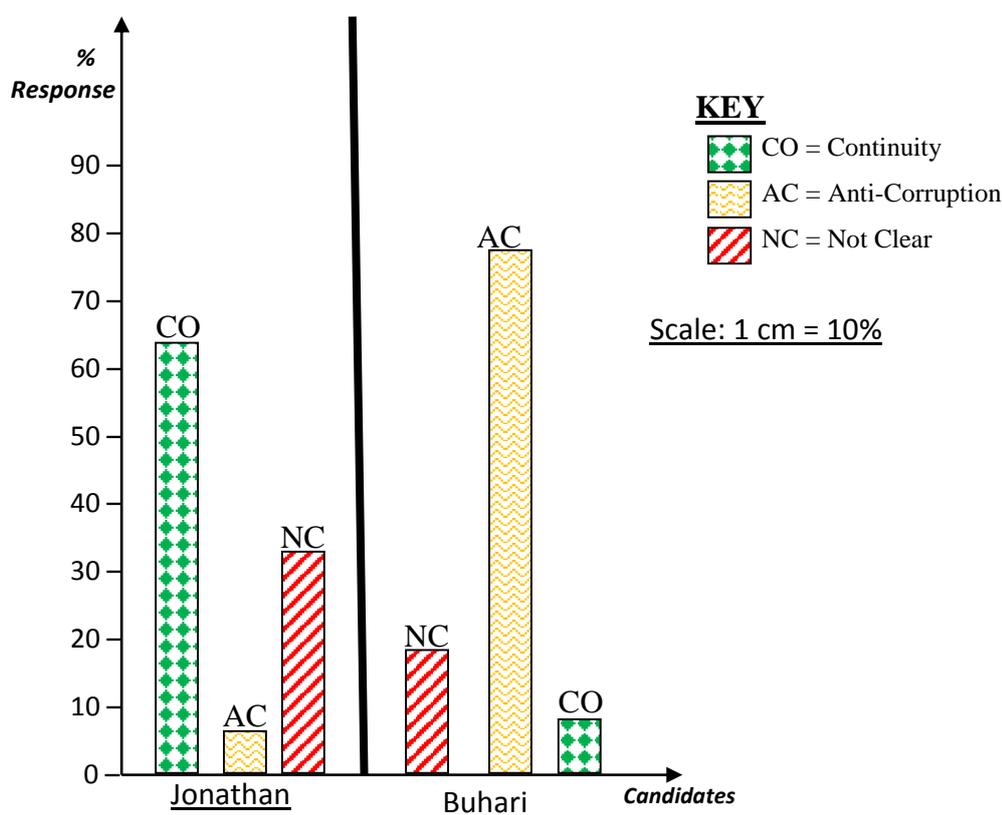
**Table 4:**

| Response        | Frequency  | Percentage    |
|-----------------|------------|---------------|
| Continuity      | 26         | 6.90          |
| Anti-corruption | 298        | 79.05         |
| Not clear       | 53         | 14.05         |
| <b>Total</b>    | <b>377</b> | <b>100.00</b> |

*Voters' perception of Buhari's proposal in the advertisements.*

Obtained result in table 4 above shows that less than one-tenth of the respondents or 6.90% believed that continuity was the least idea in Buhari's advertisements, followed by the 14.05% who claimed that the central idea in the advertisements was not clear. It was seen that more than three-quarters of the respondents or 79.05%, believed that Buhari's proposal was centred on anti-corruption.

A graphical illustration of the ideas expressed in the proposals of the two candidates in their political advertisements was, therefore, presented as follows for easier comprehension and comparison.



**Fig 1: Comparative representation of perceived USP**

The illustration shows that for Jonathan, continuity is the central message in his political advertisements while that of Buhari is anti-corruption. It is the two respective ideas that the candidates presented for consideration by the Nigerian electorate.

The study further wanted to know how the used USP related to voters' situation in Nigeria, hence research question two.

**R.Q2:** To what extent do voters relate the proposals to their need satisfaction?

Item 4 in the questionnaire was used to answer the above question. The item sought to know which of the two proposals by candidates appealed more to voters as tonic for voting. Data obtained were analyzed as follows:

**Table 5:**

| <b>Response</b> | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage</b> |
|-----------------|------------------|-------------------|
| Jonathan        | 113              | 30.00             |
| Buhari          | 191              | 51.00             |
| Undecided       | 73               | 19.00             |
| <b>Total</b>    | <b>377</b>       | <b>100.00</b>     |

*Respondents' choice of candidate's proposal.*

The result from above table shows that more persons at 51% preferred Buhari's proposal to that of Jonathan at 30%. It means that there were 1.7 more persons who liked Buhari's proposal than that of Jonathan. It is, however, worrisome that as much as nearly one-fifth of the respondents or 19% were undecided in the choice of any candidate's proposals.

The study therefore, wanted to know if the selected proposal satisfied voters' respective needs. Item 5 in the questionnaire was used to determine respondent's need satisfaction by the candidates' proposals. Obtained data were analyzed as follows:

**Table 6:**

| <b>Response</b> | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage</b> |
|-----------------|------------------|-------------------|
| Yes             | 298              | 79.05             |
| No              | 33               | 8.75              |
| Not sure        | 33               | 12.20             |
| <b>Total</b>    | <b>377</b>       | <b>100.00</b>     |

*Respondents' need satisfaction by selected proposal.*

Result from the table 6 above shows that more than three-quarters or 79.05% of the respondents claimed that their selected proposal satisfied their needs for choosing a particular candidate's proposal. Also, less than one-quarter of the respondents either were not satisfied or held no specific opinion on the issue at 20.95%. It implies that respondents as voters, largely related the proposals to their need satisfaction within Nigeria's political environment.

**R.Q3:** Does any significant relationship exist between the presented proposals and voter propensity for candidate selection?

Item 6 in the questionnaire was used to answer the above question. The item wanted to know if the selected offer made the respondent want to vote for the candidate. Obtained data were presented and analyzed as follows:

**Table 7:**

| <b>Response</b> | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage</b> |
|-----------------|------------------|-------------------|
| Yes             | 139              | 36.87             |
| No              | 95               | 25.20             |
| Not really      | 143              | 37.93             |
| <b>Total</b>    | <b>377</b>       | <b>100.00</b>     |

*Voters' perception of Buhari's advertisement.*

Result from the table above shows that whereas less than two-fifths or 36.87% were disposed to selecting a candidate based on the presented USP, about one-quarter or 25.20% were not, while 37.94% held no specific opinion. It means that the difference between those who held a positive opinion as compared to the ones that held a negative opinion was 11.67% or more than one-tenth of the respondents as voters. It was discovered that inspite of the large extent of those who felt satisfied by their selected proposal in table 7 above, most of the respondents at 37.93% held no specific opinion, if the selected USP could dispose them to select the candidate. The difference between those who held a positive opinion from those who held no specific opinion was 1.06% in favour of the undecided. It means that most of the respondents as voters, were undecided on the candidate to select.

### Testing the Research Hypothesis

The three formulated hypotheses were tested, using chi-square goodness of fit. The study assumed a marginal error of 5% or 0.05 and a degree of freedom of 2. It means that the table or critical chi-square value was 5.991 in this study.

**H<sub>0</sub>:** Voters are not able to differentiate Jonathan's proposal from that of Buhari in their political advertisements.

Item 1 in the questionnaire was used to test the above hypothesis as follows:

**Table 8**

| <b>O<sub>1</sub></b> | <b>E<sub>1</sub></b> | <b>O<sub>1</sub>-E<sub>1</sub></b> | <b>(O<sub>1</sub>-E<sub>1</sub>)<sup>2</sup></b> | <b><math>\frac{(O_1-E_1)^2}{E_1}</math></b> |
|----------------------|----------------------|------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|
| 67.64                | 33.33                | 34.31                              | 1177.18                                          | 35.32                                       |
| 15.65                | 33.33                | -17.68                             | 312.58                                           | 9.38                                        |
| 16.71                | 33.34                | -16.63                             | 276.56                                           | 8.30                                        |
| <b>100.00</b>        | <b>100.00</b>        | <b>0.00</b>                        | -                                                | <b>53.00</b>                                |

*Ability to distinguish between candidates' commercials.*

Result obtained from table 8 shows that  $X_{cal}$  or  $X^2 = 53.00$ . It also shows that  $X_{cal} > X_{tab}$  at 5.991. It implies that the  $X^2 = 53.00 > 5,991$  by a positive difference of 47.01 or 8.85 times. It means that the above stated null hypothesis was rejected while its alternative was accepted. The result, therefore, confirms that voters are able to differentiate Jonathan's proposal from that of Buhari in their political advertisements. The study thenafter, wanted to know if voters related the proposals to their need satisfaction.

**H<sub>0</sub>:** Voters do not relate the proposals to their need satisfaction

Item 5 in the questionnaire was used to test the above stated hypothesis. Obtained data were analyzed as follows:

**Table 9**

| O <sub>1</sub> | E <sub>1</sub> | O <sub>1</sub> -E <sub>1</sub> | (O <sub>1</sub> -E <sub>1</sub> ) <sup>2</sup> | $\frac{(O_1-E_1)^2}{E_1}$ |
|----------------|----------------|--------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 79.05          | 33.33          | 45.72                          | 2090.32                                        | 62.72                     |
| 8.75           | 33.33          | -24.58                         | 604.18                                         | 18.13                     |
| 12.20          | 33.34          | -21.14                         | 446.90                                         | 13.40                     |
| <b>100.00</b>  | <b>100.00</b>  | <b>0.00</b>                    | -                                              | 94.25                     |

*Need satisfied by selected proposal.*

The result obtained shows that  $X_{cal}$  or 94.25. Since the table value or  $X_{tab} = 5.991$ , then  $X_{cal} > X_{tab}$ . Therefore,  $X^2 = 94.25 > 5.991$  by a large margin of 88.26 or .73 times. The said result implies that voters to a large extent related the candidates proposals to their situations. It means that the null hypothesis above was rejected and its alternative was accepted. It shows that voters relate proposals to their need satisfaction. The study thenafter wanted to know if the selected proposal has any relationship with a propensity to select a candidate.

**H<sub>0</sub>:** No significant relationship exists between the presented proposals and voter propensity for candidate selection.

Item 6 in the questionnaire was used to test the above hypothesis. Obtained data were analyzed as follows:

**Table 10:**

| O <sub>1</sub> | E <sub>1</sub> | O <sub>1</sub> -E <sub>1</sub> | (O <sub>1</sub> -E <sub>1</sub> ) <sup>2</sup> | $\frac{(O_1-E_1)^2}{E_1}$ |
|----------------|----------------|--------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 36.87          | 33.33          | 3.54                           | 12.53                                          | 0.38                      |
| 25.20          | 33.33          | -8.13                          | 66.10                                          | 2.00                      |
| 37.93          | 33.34          | 4.59                           | 21.07                                          | 0.63                      |
| <b>100.00</b>  | <b>100.00</b>  | <b>0.00</b>                    | -                                              | 3.01                      |

*Disposition to vote candidate based on proposal.*

Result obtained from testing the third null hypothesis above shows that the  $X_{cal}$  or  $X^2$  as the calculated chi-square value was 3.01 as compared to  $X_{tab}$  or table value of 5.991. It means that  $X^2 = 3.01 < 5.991$ . The result shows that the calculated chi-square value of 3.01 was less than the table value of 5.991 by a difference of 2.98 or nearly 3 times. It implies that the null hypothesis was accepted and its alternative rejected, hence, no significant relationship exists between the presented proposals and voter propensity for candidate selection.

**Data Obtained and Analyzed from Interview**

Six questions were posed to each of the 10 interviewees selected purposively from each city in the three States studied in this exercise. The same set of questions was used as the scale for evaluating the response of those interviewed. The summary of findings were as follows:

Question 1 sought to find out if those interviewed had seen the political advertisements of Goodluck Jonathan and Muhammadu Buhari on television. Majority of them claimed to have

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seen the television commercials except for very few, who claimed that power outage and lack of viewing time made it difficult for them to watch the advertisements.

The interviewees were asked at Question 2, if they could differentiate the proposals contained in the different candidate's advertisements, as presented on television. Majority claimed they could. Only a few persons said that they were confused because one of the candidates had so many commercials that had no specific idea or proposition.

Question 3 asked the specific proposal Jonathan offered to Nigerians. Majority echoed "continuity" in transformation. They pointed to the performance of Jonathan as President, as their understanding of why the advertisements harped on continuity.

Question 4 asked the specific proposal Buhari offered to Nigerians. Majority echoed "anti-corruption" in economic and social life. They pointed to "war against indiscipline" as earlier executed by Buhari as Head of State, as their understanding of why the advertisements harped on "anti-corruption".

Question 5 wanted to know which of the two offers made by the candidates appealed more to them. Majority preferred "anti-corruption" to "continuity". They claimed that corruption was the bane of the Nigerian society, which when tackled, would lead to a better Nigeria. They said that corruption as witnessed in Nigeria should not continue.

Question 6 were asked if their choosen offer would make them want to select one candidate from the other at the 2015 presidential election in Nigeria. Only a few felt that the USP as presented by the candidates should guide their choice, while a simple majority either held no opinion on the issue as undecided or did not feel that USP should direct their choice of candidate at the 2015 presidential election in Nigeria.

The above findings from interview, as the qualitative method, were thenafter compared to those obtained from the survey research method as the qualitative approach. The simlienity of results, therefore, helped the study to assert a higher degree of credibility.

### **Results/Findings**

The study found the following:

- ❖ People in the study area as respondents and voters, watched the political advertisements of both Goodluck Jonathan and Muhammadu Buhari on television. They were able to differentiate the proposals made by Jonathan and Buhari respectively, through their respective unique selling propositions.
- ❖ Jonathan offered "Continuity" while Buhari offered "anti-corruption", as their respective USP in the said advertisements. The respondents related the respective proposals to their different situations and were able to select their preferred proposal.
- ❖ There was no significant relationship between the selected proposal and voter propensity to select a candidate based on the presented unique selling proposition.

### **DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

The television commercial as political communication exposed the proposals of both Jonathan and Buhari to public glare. It was the awareness created through the political advertisements that led to a better understanding of the competitive offer made by each of those candidates.

The generated understanding led to the ability of the respondents to differentiate between the proposals of each candidate.

Both “continuity” and “anti-corruption” referred to issues presented for voter consideration, as political manifestoes. They refer to performance plan, for selection into office in the 2015 presidential election in Nigeria. It is how the respondent interpreted the USP and related it to his or her situation in Nigeria that decided choice between the proposals.

The major finding in this study is that the choice of a unique selling proposition in political advertising is not a compelling force to candidate selection at election. It explains why there is no significant relationship between the selected proposal and voter propensity to select a candidate at election.

## **IMPLICATION FOR RESEARCH AND PRACTICE**

HOW TO CRAFT A MESSAGE, IN ORDER TO PROVIDE a discernable proposal in a competitive market situation, is a subject for intellectual investigation. It means that the performance environment and audience expectation must be well understood before a message can be constructed to move a mass audience to a desired action. Communication scholars and practitioners should, therefore, determine how media waste exposure can be minimized through the generation of a unique selling proposition which provides a better proposal to the message consumer than competition can. It is the aptness of USP to message consumers’ desires and need satisfaction that can guarantee patronage in marketing situations.

## **CONCLUSION**

Political communication content should be well focused to attract audience attention, retain their interest and elicit the desired response. It must be persuasive enough to generate zeal in achieving the communication objective. It is when the message consumer is able to be moved by the presented unique selling proposition that selection and choice in alternatives can be assured, since the USP serves as the differentiating element in political advertisements.

## **FUTURE RESEARCH**

Something else seem to be responsible for persuading voter behaviour other than the unique selling proposition. It is the “something” that is recommended to be further investigated in another study, so as to craft unique selling, proposition around desired message content. It is when that “something” is better understood that unique selling propositions in advertisements can be made more lethal in influencing consumer opinion and efficacious as catalyst for behavioural change, as a communication strategy in political communication.

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