
Media Campaigns and Public Awareness and Participation in the 2022 Voter Registration Exercise in Enugu Metropolis of Enugu State, Nigeria

Ndidiamaka Okpara, Ph.D

Lecturer, Department of Mass Communication
Federal Polytechnic, Nekede, Owerri, Imo State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT: *This study investigated Media Campaigns and Public Awareness and Participation in the 2022 Voter Registration Exercise in Enugu Metropolis of Enugu State, Nigeria. The study adopted quantitative (descriptive) research design. The study population was residents of Enugu metropolis who were of voter registration age. Systematic random sampling technique was adopted. Questionnaire served as instrument for data collection. Data were analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21. Findings show that the mass media contributed significantly in creating awareness for public participation in the 2022 voter registration in Enugu state, Nigeria. The study recommends more utilization of the media in political mobilization for political elections in Nigeria. Content creators in particular must also take both the diversities of media audience in the area into consideration in planning and packaging such media contents to yield desired outcomes.*

KEYWORDS: media campaigns, public awareness, participation, 2022 voter registration exercise, Enugu metropolis, Enugu State, Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

Any nation that wants democracy to thrive within its shores must understand the benefits of using media organizations to campaign for peaceful and credible conducts from both the electorate and political aspirants during elections. Realising that the best means to sustain democracy is to get people involved in practices that relate to governance, it becomes necessary to sensitize them (the masses) on the pros and cons of political participation for the good of all and sundry in an ideal society. One of such means of getting the masses involved in political activities is sensitization using the mass media. They (the media) are seen as the watchdog of the society, a mirror that reflects back to the society itself as well as carriers of information on the socio-political, economic and other structures of the society. Realizing these social responsibilities of the media in an idea society as well as the power of the media themselves Sambe (2015, p. 122) states that:

The problem of examining the role of the media in political communication and its effects on national issues, election campaigns, voter registration... is not confined to Nigeria alone. Anywhere in the world, the press has always being involved in politics, formation of public opinion, perception of images of candidates for political offices... The education, information,

enlightenment as well as the presentation and clarification of issues, values, goals, and changes in culture and society. Some kinds of communication on some kinds of issues, brought to the attention of some kinds of people under some kinds of conditions have some kinds of effects.

To relate the above to our topic of study, it becomes necessary for us to state that, media campaigns and public awareness and participation in 2022 voter registration exercise in Enugu metropolis, Enugu State, can be realized if the media which operate in the area carry out their media sensitization on the electorate properly. To do this, the media ought to be at the forefront of voter education on the need to obtain voter registration cards which automatically empowers them to be eligible voters during the forthcoming 2023 general elections in Nigeria in general and Enugu State in particular. The reason for the role of the media in campaigning for public awareness and participation in 2022 voter registration exercise in Enugu metropolis cannot be overemphasized because Ekeanyanwu (2015: p. 166) notes that, “the already entrenched position that the media are political instruments and that the development of Nigerian democracy and politics is closely linked with that of the media is not questionable”.

As marketers normally say that customers are kings in marketing, when it comes to politics, politicians believe that voters or the electorate are kings because; where there is true democratic practice and where elections are conducted in a credible way, public office-seekers usually rely on the electorate in order to be voted into power. The above simply means that the more the electorate is made to be aware of how to participate in elections and other political activities, the better for all and sundry and the success of democracy itself. Having said this, voters need to be properly sensitized on how best to engage in voter registration so that, they can be credible enough to vote during elections. If such knowledge about voter registration is not observed, those who ought to vote during elections would be found wanting. It is based on this that proper media campaign is needed to get the masses to obtain voters' cards for the forthcoming 2023 general elections in Nigeria in general and Enugu State in particular.

Statement of the Research Problem

It is not disputable that the media contribute a lot in political development in an ideal society. The reason for this is for the media to help in the enthronement of democracy which many believe is the best form of governance. But media critics are sometimes worried that the media have not really campaigned or properly created awareness amongst the electorate on how best to prepare as well as participate in political activities which are going on in their society. Also, it is still a thing of contention amongst some media critics that the media are usually censored to favour a particular political party or its candidates to the detriment of the entire society thereby putting political activities in jeopardy. This problem stated above and the idea that media campaigns may not have created the needed awareness for the masses to participate in the 2022 voter registration exercise in Enugu State, is another form of worry to this researcher. Again, it is not yet established here whether there is significant relationship between media campaigns and increase in awareness of the need to participate in the 2022 voter registration exercise amongst those living in Enugu metropolis. It is based on the above identified problem that this researcher embarked on this study.

Objectives of the Study

The general objectives of this study is to ascertain whether media campaigns have encouraged the masses to be aware and participate in the 2022 voter registration exercise in Enugu metropolis of Enugu State. Specifically, the following are the objectives of the study. They include to:

1. Determine the extent to which media created awareness of the 2022 voter registration exercise in Enugu metropolis, Enugu State.
2. Investigate the level of participation in the 2022 voter registration exercise in Enugu metropolis of Enugu State.
3. Find out whether there was significant relationship between media campaigns and increase in awareness and participation in the 2022 voter registration exercise in Enugu metropolis, Enugu State.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. To what extent to did the media create awareness of the 2022 voter registration exercise in Enugu metropolis, Enugu State?
2. What was the level of participation in the 2022 voter registration exercise in Enugu metropolis of Enugu State?
3. Was there any significant relationship between media campaigns and increase in awareness and participation in the 2022 voter registration exercise in Enugu metropolis, Enugu State?

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Conceptual Review:

The mass media (whether conventional media, such as; radio, television, newspapers, magazines, etc or social media such as; The Internet, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, etc), exert a lot of influence on their audiences or users as the case may be. People rely on the media for their information on political-related activities because they not only set agenda for the public to discuss political issues, they act as a medium for the public to see or hear about politics at any level of human endeavour. It is in line with the above that Mojekwu (2018, p. 63) asserts that:

The media have for a long time played a vital role in bringing about change in society and have been credited with accelerating the rate of development in various parts of the world. One of the conflicts in many parts of the developing world is related to the level of political socialization and participation. The extent to which the people are politically socialized would have a bearing on their political awareness and appreciation of political circumstances.

The above simply confirms the idea that media campaigns, public awareness and participation are needed in Enugu metropolis of Enugu State to ensure that, the public are made to be part of the 2022 voter registration exercise. This will go a long way to give them the opportunity to obtain their voters' cards (otherwise known as Permanent Voters Card (PVC)) in order to be eligible for the 2023 general elections voting process. Without media education and campaigns,

it would be difficult for those who are living in Enugu metropolis to know all about what it takes to be involved in the exercise. The reason for this is based on the premise that the media provide their audiences or users with information with all sorts of political activities in aster, connective, interactive and participatory manner. It is in line with the above that Baran (1999, p. 325) states that “media impact on the political campaigns and voting were at the centre of some of mass communication’s earliest research on the elections... the overall conclusion drawn from this earliest work was that media had impact on campaigns and voting and that the impact was in the form of reinforcement”. What we are saying here is that, the media create the opportunity for the public to be aware of certain political issues which are going on in the society. The media campaign on the other hand motives the masses to participate in such political activities reported through the media.

As earlier stated by this researcher, whether the media in question are conventional or social media, one important thing that must be known about the media as they relate to politics is that, they provide their audiences the needed information to understand political related issues as well as set agenda for the discussion of such political issue. They do this, through proper education of voters on how to exercise their democratic rights, by providing a platform for the political parties and candidates to communicate their messages to the electorate as well as acting as an open forum for debates and discussions in order to understand what those involved in politics have for the masses. In all, the media are needed to ensure that proper media campaign(s) are put in place in order to create awareness on the need to allow voters to register and prepare for any political activity especially that of elections which are expected to come in 2023.

Media Campaigns and Public Participation in Politics

Generally, both online and offline media campaigns have being in existence to ensure that voters register for the 2022 registration exercise for political activities especially the acquisition of voters’ cards in order to vote during elections. The following are some of the media campaigns in Nigeria as they relate to this topic of study. According to Premium Times (2021) a media campaign to enable voters register for the Continuous Voters Registration (CVR) exercise known as “I sabi vote Initiative” attempts to change the narrative that the Nigerian youths only rant about government’s policies but are absent when it comes to the real work – voting. According to Oyeyemi Abass, one of the campaign initiators who use both Pidgin English and its conventional type, “we are trying to change the narrative by driving conversations that would make them vote and also by breaking down the technicalities involved in the electoral process to the simplest form. We are also ensuring that voters’ education is at the peak of our campaign.” This media campaign helps a lot to increase voters’ interests to register in Enugu metropolis in preparation for the 2023 general elections in Nigeria.

Another media campaign and public awareness and participation in the 2022 voter registration exercise is “My Voice: My Future (MVMF). This media campaign uses both online and offline media messages to increase voters’ knowledge about voter registration and other political related activities. Through this media campaign according to a social blogger and founder – Ife Sarumi, Nigerians are made to be aware of the need to fully participate in the 2022 general elections by obtaining Private Voters’ card and other media messages needed to understand the political landscape of Nigeria.

That of Global Leadership Development Forum (DLDF) is another media campaign established to ensure that Nigerians do not only obtain PVCs for voting, but are made to be involved in the discussion of political issues which are going on in the country today. The campaign according to the organizers, seek to promote and encourage active participation in the political and governance chain in Nigeria. It encourages every Nigerian to take out time and register as well as obtain the PVC that will be the only legitimate tool for one to participate in the voting process, especially during the forthcoming 2023 general elections in Nigeria.

There is also the media campaign to create awareness on the need to register now that the voter registration exercise is going on in Nigeria. The campaign tagged “YvoteNaijia” whose co-ordinator is Abideen Olasupo (a social commentator and writer) is meant to mobilize Nigerians to be fully involved in the voter registration exercise. The platform is said to have coordinators in the 36 states of the federation and is seeking to attend its reach to the 774 local government areas in Nigeria. The overall reason for the formation of these media campaigns on public awareness and participation in 2022 voter registration exercise is that, Premium Times (2022) carried out analysis on the date from the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) and found out that, there is consecutive decline in election turnout from 2003-2019.

Such decline in election turnout has made the masses to leave their fundamental human rights to vote and be voted for to politicians and political parties who exploit them during elections and manipulate votes and election results to the detriment of the masses. It is based on these reasons that media campaigns which were discussed in this study are meant to create public awareness and participation in the 2022 voter registration exercise to enable them obtain voters’ cards which empower them to choose whom they want to be their leaders. This will go a long way to give power back to the people especially when they vote to a political party or candidate of their choice in 2023.

In the past, Nigerian media have been used to launch campaigns on how voters ought to register for political and electoral participation. One of such media campaigns was organized by Music Television (MTV) in 2011 when it launched a pro-democracy campaign in Nigeria ahead of the 2011 Nigeria elections. The campaign tagged “Choose or Lose Campaign Nigeria” was organized to exercise the rights of Nigerians, especially the youth to obtain voters’ cards and encourage voter-interest and action to participate in the general elections. These and other media campaigns have helped Nigerian voters to understand the need for voters’ card otherwise known as PVCs.

Theoretical Framework

The social responsibility media theory guided this study. It was in 1947, in the United States of America (USA) that this theory – Social Responsibility emerged. As a result of the outcome of the Hutchins Commission set up in the year mentioned above by the USA government then to reconsider the idea of press freedom and the obligations or responsibilities which the press ought to perform in the society. The outcome of the commission enabled it to spell out the watchdog role by the Media. According to McQuail (2005, p. 172):

- i. The media have obligation to society, and media ownership is a public trust.

- ii. News media should be trustful, accurate, fair, objective and relevant.
- iii. The media should be free, but self-regulated etc.

In line with the above, it becomes the constitutional right and obligation of the media to ensure that issues involving public awareness and participation in 2022 voter registration exercise should be taken to their audiences or users through different media campaigns. Such political information provided to the masses in form of media campaigns, will go a long way to encourage the masses to obtain their voters cards, and carry out other political activities which will enable them to be relevant and vote during the forthcoming 2023 general elections in Nigeria. It is based on the above that this study was anchored on the social responsibility theory.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted quantitative (descriptive) research design. The reason for the adoption of this research design is that, it helped the researcher to describe situations and events relating to this study in an observable manner. Through this, research design, the researcher carried out a survey of the opinions, ideas, beliefs and general attitudes of Enugu metropolis residents on their perception of media campaigns and public awareness and participation in 2022 voter registration exercise in their area. The study population was residents of Enugu metropolis who were of voter registration age which was put at 722,664 by the Nigerian national electoral body. Sample size was determined using the Taro Yamane formula to determine the sample size of the study.

The formula is:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where n = Desired sample size

N = Population size under study

e = Level of significance of error or limit of tolerable error assumed to be 0.05 or 5%

I = Unity (always constant in value)

Working formula:

$$\begin{aligned} n &= \frac{955,362}{1 + 955,362(0.05)^2} \\ n &= \frac{955,362}{1 + 955,362 \times 0.0025} \\ n &= \frac{955,362}{1 + 2389} \\ n &= \frac{955,362}{2390} \\ &= 399,73305393 \text{ App. } 400 \text{ (Sample size)} \end{aligned}$$

Systematic random sampling technique was adopted. This enabled the researcher to administer the research instrument to the members of the research population without any form of bias. Also, this sampling technique helped to maintain an all-inclusive members of the population in a fair and objective manner using an interval of 10 from the population of study.

Questionnaire served as instrument for data collection. The reason for this choice is that questionnaire helped the researcher to collect data from the respondents in a quantitative manner capable of addressing the research problem. The questionnaire consists of both the open-ended and close-ended forms of questions that addressed the research problem as well as the demographic data of the respondents in Enugu metropolis as they relate to the topic under study.

Experts in the field of mass communication who are Masters and Ph.D (Doctor of Philosophy) were hired and given the research instrument to validate. After two consecutive times of validation, they (the experts) certified the instrument as valid for this study. Similarly, the researcher conducted a pilot survey using a test-retest method where 40 or 10% of the sample size of the study were used to test the validity of the instrument. To do this, the researcher distributed the copies of the questionnaire to those used in the pilot survey. They filled them out and returned them to the researcher who tabulated and analysed the copies of the questionnaire. This process was repeated the second time and there was consistency of results of the studies conducted twice. This resulted to internal consistency of the measuring instrument and correlation between them. It was as a result of the above that the researcher adopted the instrument as a reliable one for this study.

Method of Data Collection

The researcher hired four (4) research assistants to help her administer and collect data for this study in a faster and more convenient way. Face-to-face method of data collection was used whereby the researcher and her research assistants met with the respondents on one-on-one basis and appealed to them to help in filling the questionnaire. It took the researchers four weeks to distribute and collect back the instrument for presentation and analysis.

Method of Data Analysis

The researcher presented data generated from the respondents using response categories, frequency and percentages which were presented in tabular forms. Also, the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21 was used in data analysis during the study.

Data Presentation and Analysis

This study descriptively analysed both the demographic and thematic responses generated from the respondents. Although, the researcher and her research assistants distributed 400 copies of the questionnaire, 396 of them were properly filled out and returned to the researcher which represented 99% of the return rate whereas 4 copies or 1% were not returned to the researcher. The high rate of return of the questionnaire, made it reliable to be used in data presentation and analysis.

Below is the Demographic Data of the respondents

Table 1: Gender Distribution of the Respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	230	58
Female	166	42
Total	396	100
Source: Field Survey, 2022		

Table 1 above indicates that, 230 of the respondents representing 58% of them were males whereas 166 representing 42% of them were females. This further shows that the greater number of the respondents were males.

Table 2: Marital status of the Respondents

Marital Status	Frequency	Percentage
Married	318	80
Single	78	20
Divorced	-	-
Total	396	100
Source: Field Survey, 2022		

Data generated from table 2 above indicated that 318, representing 80% of the respondents were married and 78 or 20% of them were single. None of them is a divorcee. This again indicates that the greater numbers of the respondents were married.

Table 3: Age Distribution of the Respondents

Age Limit	Frequency	Percentage
18 – 29 years	100	24
30 -40 years	242	61
45 and above years	54	15
Total	396	100
Source: Field Survey, 2022		

Table 3 above indicates that 100, representing 24% of the respondents were between the ages of 18-29 years, 242 of them or 61% were between 30-44 years whereas 54 or 15% of them were between 45 years and above. This shows that the greater number of the respondents were 30-44 years.

Analysis of the Thematic Data Generated from the Respondents.

Table 4: Determination of whether the media have created proper awareness for the masses to participate in the 2022 voter registration exercise in Enugu metropolis, Enugu State.

Response category	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	206	52
Agree	92	23
Strongly Disagree	76	19
Disagree	22	6
Undecided	-	-
Total	396	100
Source: Field Survey, 2022		

In terms of table 4 and data generated from it 206 of the respondents or 52% of them strongly agreed to the research question 1, 92 or 23 of them agreed. Also, 76 representing 19% strongly disagreed and 22 or 6% disagreed. None of the respondents were undecided. This outcome strongly indicates that, the respondents strongly agreed that the media have created proper awareness for the masses to participate in the 2022 voter registration exercise in Enugu metropolis, Enugu State.

Table 5: Determination of whether the respondents' opinions on media campaigns and public awareness and participation in voter registration exercise in Enugu metropolis have led to increase in political communication in the area.

Response category	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	158	40
Agree	126	30
Strongly Disagree	65	17
Disagree	38	10
Undecided	9	3
Total	396	100
Source: Field Survey, 2022		

Data generated from the above table indicate that 158 or 40% of the respondents strong agreed to the research question 2, 126 or 30% of them agreed. Also, 65 or 17% strongly disagreed and 38, representing 10% disagreed. Again, 9 or 3% of them were undecided. The above

further shows that, the greater number of the respondents strongly agreed that, media campaigns and awareness and participation in voter registration exercise in Enugu metropolis, Enugu State have led to an increase in political communication in the area.

Table 6: To determine whether there is significant difference between media campaigns and increase in awareness of the need to participate in voter registration exercise in Enugu metropolis, Enugu state.

Response category	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	124	31
Agree	114	29
Strongly Disagree	79	20
Disagree	79	20
Undecided	-	-
Total	396	100
Source: Field Survey, 2022		

The table above indicates that out of the 396 respondents used in data collection, 124 or 31% of them strongly agreed to the research question. 114 of them representing 29% agreed whereas 79 or 20% and another 79 or 20% of them strongly disagreed and disagreed respectively. None of the respondents said undecided. This to a greater extent shows that the greater number of the respondents strongly agreed that, there is significant difference between media campaigns and an increase in awareness of the need to participate in voter registration exercise in Enugu metropolis, Enugu State.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

In line with the outcome of data presented and analysed in this study in relation to the three research objectives and research questions asked in this study, it becomes glaring that a lot of revelations were made from this study. Amongst them were data generated from table 4 that presented and analysed responses made from research question one that determined whether the media have created proper awareness for the masses to participate in the 2022 voter registration exercise in Enugu metropolis, Enugu state, proved that the respondents strongly agreed to the research question. This finding is in line with earlier finding made by Olubunmi and Folorunso (2020) that, the media are used for all sorts of political campaigns for awareness creation and participation. This has direct bearing or link with the idea that; Enugu urban residents use media campaigns to be aware of the need to participate in the 2022 voter registration exercise.

Another finding made from this study is that, media campaigns and public awareness and participation in voter registration exercise increased in Enugu metropolis as a result of political communication provided by the media on the issue. Since the respondents strongly agreed to this assertion as we can find in table 5 that presented and analysed responses from the respondents, it becomes glaring for us to state that, this study has semblance with that conducted by Ekeanyanwu (2015) which found out that, the masses, especially voters use media campaigns to know about as well as participate in political-related activities in Nigeria.

The last but not the least finding was made from data generated from table 6 that presented and analysed research question three which found out that, the respondents strongly agreed that, there is significant relationship between media campaigns and an increase in the awareness of the need to participate in voter registration exercise in Enugu metropolis, Enugu State. Again, this finding has proved to be in conformity with earlier studies conducted by Joe (2021) and Omotoso (2020) whose studies found out that media campaigns encouraged voters to participate in political activities like voter registration exercise.

CONCLUSION

Having summed-up the nitty-gritty of this study as it relates to the findings made from this study, it becomes imperative for us to conclude that; media campaigns were used and are still being used in creating public awareness and participation in the ongoing voter registration exercise, not only in Enugu metropolis, Enugu state but the entire federation.

Recommendations

Based on the objectives of this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Media professionals should carry out media campaigns which will encourage voters to participate in the political activities which are going on in Enugu state in particular and Nigeria in general.
2. Electoral umpire like the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and civil liberty organizations in Nigeria should use media campaigns to sensitize the masses on the need to participate in the ongoing 2022 voter registration exercise in Nigeria.
3. Voters in Enugu state should use political information provided through the media to make wise voting decisions during the 2023 general elections in the country.

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