

BILLBOARD POLITICAL ADVERTISEMENT ON ELECTORATES' PERCEPTION AND VOTING BEHAVIOUR IN THE 2023 GENERAL ELECTION IN PORT HARCOURT CITY

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Abstract

This study examined the influence of billboard political advertisements on electorates' perception and voting behavior in the 2023 general election in Port Harcourt City. The research was guided by three objectives and anchored on the Agenda-Setting Theory. Using the survey research method, the study projected a population of 1,148,665, with a sample size of 384 respondents. Findings revealed that billboard political advertisements significantly shaped voters' perceptions of candidates, which in turn influenced their voting decisions. However, the study also established that the credibility attributed to advertised candidates was not solely dependent on the advertisements, but on other external factors as well. Additionally, respondents indicated that billboard advertisements were not accorded much importance in their voting considerations during the 2023 election. The study recommends that political parties, government, and candidates should continue to employ billboard advertising as a tool for promoting parties, policies, and candidates. To enhance believability, political parties should field credible candidates, while candidates should place greater emphasis on creativity and effective messaging in billboard campaigns to increase their relevance and impact.

1.0 Introduction

Generally, advertising is crucial to the modern day business; ranging from the hawkers of tomatoes, to the multi-national companies that engage in the production of goods and services, advertising is a veritable tool with which to have and keep buyers. To succeed in this ultimate goal of keeping customers to their goods and services, the advertisers employ a lot of mouth-watering promises. As a branch of marketing communication, advertising has many branches which over the years have generated a lot of new postulations, conceptions and school of thoughts by different practitioners and scholars in the field. One of such branches which have found a comfortable home in the field of advertising is political advertising. Politicians engage the service of different advertising agencies; as a matter of fact, people champion the need for better leadership and express these needs in form of advertising and manifestoes; conference rallies from ward to ward, billboard, writings, granting and publishing interviews among others. The essence of political advertising is not for the buyers- the electorates to just come and buy the product, but to appeal to their emotions, in order to win their votes. However, unlike commercial product, they do not have to buy the candidates, but come out to cast their votes for him, to top in the election and this is only done by eligible electorates within the constituency as political advertising is not targeted at every one, but those eligible to vote. Koga (2006, p.37) notes that:

In politics, the market is likewise a group of people who share a common interest, need or desire, which may be satisfied by the election of political candidate. However, unlike

commercial products, they do not have to afford him. A political market is composed of those in the candidate's district of influence, who are eligible to vote, those people are called constituency voters.

In modern times, political advertising is one of several ways politicians and political parties mobilize the electorates. Political advertising can be done in several ways, such as television programmes, radio, newspapers and display of candidate's portraits, with several promising and persuasive inscription on the billboard, magazines and even the new media of communication. Part of the basic objectives of this political advertising is to gain attention of the electorates and for this reason, political advertising sometimes involves orthodox strategies to achieve its aim.

Nigeria witnessed an unprecedented increase in the number and style of political advertising in the last national and state elections held in 2011. Most of the political parties in the land mounted one form of political advertising or the other, to bring to the attention of the voting public, the parties' political philosophy (manifesto) as well as the parties' contestants for the various elective offices in the country. Many political office seekers also used political advertising to market themselves to the prospective voters. Several media of political advertising were employed during the electioneering campaigns. Most notable of these media include radio, television, Internet, newspapers, magazines, billboards, posters and others. Political parties and their flag bearers used these media, particularly the television, to their advantage in a bid to outwitting one another in the 2023 elections battle.

The use of billboards has been around for many centuries. Prior to the advent of motor 'vehicles, primitive examples of billboards were sometimes used to alert people travelling on foot, on horse-back or by carriage that an inn could be found within a distance up the road. Along with naming the inn and providing an approximation of the distance of the establishment, the billboard would sometimes list some of the amenities such as clean beds, food and presence of facilities to house the carriage or stable the horse (Stanton 2008). Hence this study examined billboard political advertising and electorate's perception and voting in 2023 general election in Port Harcourt

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Anyone who passes a major road in Port Harcourt must come across political billboards, but may not be sure of how people receive them. One may not be sure of the impression they create on their target audience, especially with regard to political communication and 2023 elections in particular.

In addition, political billboards do not only bear colourful messages, their messages are persuasive and they say a lot about what aspirants would do for people if elected as a medium of

political communication has such power to arrest the attention of its target audience and influence their voting decision. We do not know if residents of Port Harcourt City during 2023 political advertisements on billboards respond to these messages on election days.

One would wonder whether they see, billboards as influential. Hence this study investigates billboard political advertisement and electorate's perception and voting in 2023 general election in Port Harcourt City LGA.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The following objectives were used to guide the study and they are to:

1. ascertain the influence of billboard political advertisement on Port Harcourt City LGA resident's perception and voting in 2023 general election;
2. examine if residents of Port Harcourt City LGA believe in billboard political advertising messages; and
3. examine the level of importance attached to billboard political advertisement by Port Harcourt City LGA residents

Review of Related Literature

2.1 Conceptual Review: The Concept of Advertising

Advertising has to do with informing the people about the existence of something, so as to draw attention to it; it is giving of notice, so as to draw attention. Advertising is unique and special and if anything is to be known about the existence of a product, commodity, item, good, service or a political candidate, then there is need for advertising. Advertising describes any form of communication, which is principally aimed at promoting the sales and patronage of goods and services. Advertising as a planned communication is both an act and art of communication. Individuals and government endeavour to communicate their goods, products or services, as the case may be, to the audience (Asemah, 2011).

Arens (2008, p.7) says that advertising is the structured and composed non-personal communication of information, usually paid for and usually persuasive in nature, about products, services and ideas by identified sponsors, through various mass media. The definition given by Arens is closely in line with that of Dominick (2007, p.321), which says that advertising is a form of non-personal presentation and promotion of ideas, goods and services, usually paid for by an identified sponsor. Advertising intends to promote the sales of a product or service and also to inform the masses about the highlights of the product or the service features. It is an efficient means of communicating to the world, the value of the product or the service. Advertising utilises different media to reach out to the masses and uses different types of appeals to connect to the customers across the globe.

Advertising is the process of persuading potential customers to buy products or promote its services. It is the branch of marketing that deals with communicating to customers about products, brands and services. Advertising is a form of communication used to persuade an audience (viewers, readers or listeners) to take some action with respect to products, ideas or services. Most commonly, the desired result is to drive consumer behaviour with respect to a commercial offering, although political and ideological advertising is also common. Advertising messages are usually paid for by sponsors and viewed via various traditional media, including mass media such as newspapers, magazines, television commercials, radio advertisements, outdoor advertising or direct mail or new media, such as websites and text messages (Wikipedia, cited in Asemah, 2011).

Billboard has made their mark as a medium of advertising. Billboard advertising has grown popular as a field of professional practice and as an index of modern business. Increasingly, marketers find them as handy tools for business promotion. Their prominent position along major streets makes them instant and compelled eye catch.

Billboard are usually located at points with high vehicle and traffic consequently, uses of such point are regularly exposed to the advertisement on the board. Billboard offers the advantage of very good color production and at the same time. It is an effective reminder medium for buyers who buy on impulse. As an authority put, “They have to be powerfully executed so as to intrude on the passers-by consciousness”.

Product (1998.p5) believes the strength of billboards lays in their large prints billboards. Like newspaper use the power of photos to portray their photos to portray their power as effective visual medium. Billboard tap the full communicative effects of color photographs to force the eye of passes-by up on to the boards. Even those in traffic hurry. Unwillingly glance up at boards. Modern billboards are designed with different colours for attractions and variations.

Ban (1992), advises that one must seek a way of blending the main facts of advertising: ideas, colours and lettering. Each billboard, however ought to show originality in the use of the elements of billboard design. This is one way to assure to convert peoples gazes into rapid attention for Bakor (1991 p5). Billboard ought to be bold enough and should pass on their messages clearly and vigorously. This is because complex and over crowded billboards confuse readers and make it difficult for them to understand anything within the spilt second they speed pass. A billboard should try within Its capacity to deliver its messages with simplicity (Bakor 1991 p 15).

Illegibility is caused by small type. Wrong use of type face too wide lines and too many words on billboard. For a billboard to be devoid of the quality of boldness means that the designer has not only succeeded in straining the eyes of the public but has also attracted the

criticism of the masses (Orji, 2001) Good billboards communicate to both those targeted and otherwise interestingly to both those targeted and otherwise can hurry incite at a billboard for non performance. It becomes worse if its competitive product is concerned those who never used or like the product will then have more opportunity to dislike the product.

Udeagwu (2002) believes that political billboard is a powerful medium socialization and education. He urges government to use billboards the way politicians use them. That is using them as signposts or announcements boards to adopt them as tools of political education. This he says is necessary because the formality of other media especially newspapers make the audience feel that they are not the ones being addressed by politically educative. Newspaper content in addition. Limited access to television, together with its transience affords and retention of political messages. It is not emphasizing that a product is anything that is capable of satisfying human want in an exchange seething. Nkenambe (2003) political parties, candidates and party polices are product that can be sold to the electorates (political consumers) and other political operators in the political market.

Political advertising is one of the types of advertising that over the years has been used by politicians and their well-wishers to convince people to cast vote for them. Asemah (2010, p.20) avers that political advertising is used by politicians to persuade people to vote for them and it is therefore part and parcel of political process in Nigeria and any other democratic society. It is a very important source of communication for voters. It is the advertising that involves political parties presenting candidates in order to win votes and be in power. Okoro (1996, p.18) notes that political advertising is a special type of advertising which calls for high strategic thinking and action initiative. It starts with the objectives analysis of the image and appearance of the candidate involved (in the case of human product) or the evaluation of the programme in respect of the issues at stake (in the case of political programme merchandising). Regarding the selling of the candidate to the electorate, it may involve matters like getting a new haircut or a new suit or assuming particular positions in religious matters. This way, the candidate talks, smiles, laughs, walks, etc, is very crucial (Okoro, 1998, p.18).

In the words of Kogah (2006), political advertising functions to communicate the attributes of the politician that relates to the constituent's needs and the candidate in turn gains the voter's confidence and votes. This way this "political product" is packaged, much like a commercial product. Political advertising comes up every year that election is to be conducted in every state of the globe. Political advertising is a form of marketing communication that is aimed at selling the candidate of a party to the electorate. Political parties now package their political candidates and sell to the people, so as to draw their votes. Modern politics is therefore, incomplete without political advertising. Political advertising encompasses all forms of

advertising pertaining to building support for any and all political campaigns, including candidates running for office, ballot measures, political activism, etc.

As noted by Olujide, Adeyemi and Gbadeyuan (2010), political advertising is the use of media by political candidates to increase their exposure to the public. The extensive use of television and radio has supplanted direct appearances on the campaign trail, which was popularly used by politicians in the past five decades. Spot advertising is the most commonly used technique and it attempts to create a favourable image of the candidate and a negative image of the opponent. It links the candidate with desirable groups in the community and communicate candidate's stand on selected issues.

Generally, political advertising embraces all forms of government-related propaganda, propagation of political ideologies, political image-laundry communication as well as communication of electioneering campaign messages to attract votes, through relevant media. Political advertising is basically concerned with opinion management since it is a systematic way through which political parties and/or party candidates, and pressure groups sell their programmes, activities and actions to the electorates, members of the public and stakeholders (Biakpara, 2004). In other words, as pointed out earlier, political campaigns are not the only places we see political advertising and politicians are not the only products projected by political advertising.

In the context of this research however, political advertising will refer to the application of advertising concept and principles to win votes during elections. According to Jamieson and Campbell (2001), it entails the sponsorship of advertisements that argue that we should elect one person rather than another or urge us to vote in specific ways. It therefore entails the formulation of advertising theme, identification of target audiences, design of most appropriate advertising messages, and selection of most appropriate advertising channels and the most appropriate dosage of dissemination of the advertising messages for the purpose of attracting the most votes in a general election. The justification for political advertising in elections rests in the age-long realization that it influences voting decisions. Warren, Leinenweber and Anderson (1963, p 72) pointed this out long ago when they observed that:

For several weeks before the date of general elections, rival candidates and political parties engage in a campaign to attract voters. Some party members are not very strong in their loyalties, and an opposing candidate and party may induce them to swing to their side. There are also many voters who do not belong to any party. Attracting this 'independent' vote may make the difference between winning and losing an election.

In the same vein, Cummings and Wise (1981) point out that for every candidate for election, between nomination and election stood the campaign which is a battle ground and that victory sometimes depend on how well the battle is fought, as many voters (up to 35% of voters

or more) decide how to vote during the campaigns. In this scenario, the place of effective political advertising cannot be overemphasized since winning or losing 35% or more of voters can determine success or otherwise. No wonder Ezeudu (2003) avers that political advertising has been found to be indispensable as a key element in political campaign marketing as it is being relied on extensively to contend with the ever-mercurial and changing citizenry's political behaviours, attitudes and demands in the complex and dynamic environment of politics.

The end result of political advertising, unlike the normal advertising of goods and services, is not to promote sales or patronage but opinion management. This follows from the concession that since political advertising is a systematic way through which political parties and/or candidates for elections sell their manifestos, programmes, activities, actions and views to the electorate, it is a process to sway the opinion of the electorate to their favour (Biakpara, 2004). It is believed that voting decisions, which are highly individualistic, are products of individual opinions and to woo an individual's favourable opinion successfully is a ticket to securing that individual's votes. No wonder Abrahamson, Arterton and Orren (1988: 86) describe political advertising as "an attempt to seduce voters" to vote in a particular way or for a particular candidate or party in a general election. This view is supported by Wells, Burnett and Moriarty (1995) in their submission that political advertising is used by politicians to persuade people to vote for them. It therefore serves as an important source of communication between candidates for elections and voters thereby making it an important part of the political process in any society.

Expectedly, present day politicians continually fine-tune their strategies to create more comprehensive media mixes intended to give them the edge in the competition for voters' acceptance and support. This is in line with the notions of Prof Ikenna Nzimiro recapitulated by Biakpara (2005) and that of Ezeudu (2003) that the concept of political advertising is a positioning technique to show how one politician or political party is different from another and to build massive support for the politician or political party. This is because politicians are primarily trying to persuade audience members to adopt a certain view of themselves, or of their parties or factions, and what they are trying to achieve in politics. In this direction, political advertising positions politicians and political parties in the minds of the electorate and helps them sell their manifestoes to the public (Blumler and Gurevitch, 1995; Adum, 2007). Notable among the strategies suspected to have been adopted by political advertisers for the April 2011 general elections is the appeals to cultures of voters. What then is culture?

Culture refers to the total way of life of people and societies which guides their social interactions. It is perceived as consisting of a system of knowledge, belief, values, customs, behaviours and artifacts that are acquired, shared and used by members of a society in their daily living (Gamble and Gamble, 2002). On their part, Pearson, Nelson, Titsworth and Harter (2003)

see culture as a system of shared beliefs, values, customs, behaviours, and rituals that the members of a society use to cope with one another and with their world. The above definitions point out some basic features of culture among which are fact that it is composed of ideas, behaviours and artifacts (material possessions). Another is that culture does not thrive in individualism: It must be shared and practiced by the society as a whole otherwise it would be unpopular and extinction-bound. Culture is also acquired through the process of socialization: It is not genetically transmitted (Acholonu, 2010; Okumagba and Ogege, 2009).

Culture differs from society to society and these differences are visible in cultural compositions. In a multicultural society like Nigeria, cultural differences are visible in cultural compositions such as language, dressing, food, marriage customs, political structure, environmental practices, economic system, festivals, religion, inter-personal relationships, and tribal markings on the body, among others (Kombol, 2010; Okumagba and Ogege, 2009). As noted earlier, these cultural compositions give the members of a particular society sense of belonging. They either differentiate or unite people in the context of cultural identities and by so doing, define realities and ultimately shape the way affected people think, feel and act. This is because people with a specific culture want to conform to their popular culture in order to be accepted among their people. In the same way, people tend to be more comfortable with others who show signs of sharing their culture with them. Little wonder then that candidates and campaigners for general elections try to appeal to the cultural sentiments of the electorate.

Election is an important hallmark of enthroning and sustaining democracy in societies like ours. Umechuhwu (2004, p. 32) avers that election is paramount and highly significant in any given society. It is the time when leaders who pilot the affairs of a nation are elected. It is also the time when all the eligible voters exercise their rights as citizens to participate in the government. That is, the right to vote and to be voted for. Also writing on the importance of election, Umar, (2000, p.1) admits that elections give the people control over their governments by enabling them decide on who should be their law makers and decision makers. Hence election provides the electorates the opportunity to vote their representative into office for a particular length of time. An election can be seen as the process of selecting leaders through voting. According to Clotefelters and Prysby, cited in Lawal (2003, p.127) election can be described as mechanism which permits the largest possible part of a population to influence major decisions by choosing among contenders for political office. Lawal (2003) further states that election performs the important functions of leadership selections; it enables the electorate to indicate, and by implication, underscore their preference of a particular leader or leaders who they consider worthier than others for a specified public office.

Okwodu, cited in Lawal (2003, p.126) defines electoral system as the process by which the citizens of a state vote, to elect people to represent their interests and opinions in government.

Thus, for this purpose, the territory of the state is normally divided into various electoral constituents, the inhabitants of which vote for one of the various candidates to become their representative. Election is the celebration of the fact that in final analysis, sovereignty resides with them and they have the last say on the conduct of affairs of the nation.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study is built around agenda setting theory of mass communication. McComb and Shaw (1995) are unequivocal in identifying agenda setting as a function of the mass media. They submit that while the mass media may have little influence on the direction or intensity of attitudes, they set the agenda in the political sphere by influencing the salience of attitudes towards political issues. To buttress their point, they quote Lang and Lang thus: “The mass media force attention to certain issues. They build up public images of political figures. They are constantly presenting objects suggesting what individuals in the mass should think about, know about, and have feelings about”.

This study is anchored on the Agenda-Setting Theory, propounded by Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw in 1972. The theory emphasizes the power of the media to influence the salience of issues in the minds of the public. According to McCombs and Shaw (1972), while the media may not tell people what to think, it effectively tells them what to think about by prioritizing certain issues, personalities, or events over others. In this way, the media shapes public perception and directs attention toward selected topics.

Applying this theory to the study, billboard political advertisements serve as a medium through which political candidates and parties attempt to set the agenda for electorates during elections. By repeatedly displaying messages, slogans, and images in strategic public spaces, billboards highlight certain candidates and their campaign promises, thereby influencing voters' perceptions and evaluations (McCombs, 2004). The prominence of billboard advertisements can make electorates consider the featured candidates as more relevant or credible compared to others.

However, the study also acknowledges that while agenda setting through billboards may influence perception, voters' final decisions are moderated by other factors such as candidate credibility, political party reputation, and personal experiences. Thus, Agenda-Setting Theory provides a useful lens for understanding how billboard political advertisements attempt to shape electoral behavior and guide voting patterns in the 2023 general election in Port Harcourt.

2.3 Empirical Review:

In a study by Ijeh, N. P (2011), titled “Voters' Perception of Cultural Elements in Political Advertising for the April 2011 General Elections in Nigeria”, the paper observes that

some political advertisers for the April 2011 general elections in Nigeria incorporated cultural elements such as native languages; cultural dressing; emphasis on candidates' cultural affinities by birth, history, marriage and chieftaincy titles; cultural music and dances; cultural norms, values and ideologies; as well as visits to and endorsements of candidates by traditional rulers. Voters perceived this in good light and majority indicated that they were attracted by these cultural elements to the political advertisements and learnt about the candidates from them. However, a minority of them indicated that these incorporated cultural elements actually influenced their voting decisions. These findings, emanating from a content analysis of selected political advertisements for the elections, tally with the notion of agenda setting theory of mass communication that the media can tell people what to think about but never what to think.

Another study by Edegoh, Ezebuenyi and Asemah (2013) entitled "Television as a Medium of Political Advertising during Elections in Anambra State, Nigeria". The study, among others, aims at finding out whether exposure to television advertising influences respondents' preference for advertised candidate. The study was anchored on the agenda setting and reinforcement theory. Survey research method was adopted while the questionnaire was used as an instrument of data collection. The findings show that exposure to television advertising influences voters' preference for advertised candidates. The findings also show that television advertising generates quicker recall of advertised candidates in voters. Based on the findings, the paper concludes that the influence of television political advertising on electorates is such that it makes the voters to recall the advertised candidate and that it persuasively generates in voters, preference for the advertised candidate. The paper, therefore recommends, among others, that political parties in Nigeria should give due attention to the use of television for the dissemination of political activities.

3.0 Research Design

The design for the study was a descriptive survey. A descriptive survey according to Ali (2006) is concerned with describing events as they are without any manipulation of what is being observed. Ihechu and Ukaegbu (2018) also posit that descriptive research is concerned with the collection of data from a well-defined population which is used to describe the present condition of the population using variables under investigation. The design was considered appropriate because it enabled the researcher to identify the characteristics of the population objectively.

3.2 Population of the study

According to NPC census of 2006 which is projected to 2021 by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), the population of Port Harcourt stands at 1,148,665. The population of the

study consisted of 1,148,665 registered voters in Port Harcourt City during the 2023 general election (INEC, 2023). The sample size of 384 was determined by using Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) sample size determination table. The instrument for data collection was the questionnaire on a four point modified Likert scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD).

4.1 Presentation of Data

A total of 384 copies of the questionnaire were distributed to the respondents, out of which 376 were retrieved and used for this study.

Section A of the Questionnaire

Table 1: Copies of Questionnaire Distributed and Retrieved

S/N	Zones	Questionnaire Distributed	Questionnaire Retrieved	Retrieval Rate %
1	Town	121	120	31.25%
2	Ogbunabali	135	133	34.63%
3	Mile 3	128	124	32.29%
	Total	384	377	98.17%

Table 1 above shows the distribution of 384 copies of the questionnaire in Port Harcourt, 377 copies of the questionnaire were successfully retrieved.

Table 2: Respondents' Gender

S/N	Gender	Number of Respondents	Percentage Rate
1	Male	196	51.98%
2	Female	181	48.01%
	Total	377	99.99

Table 2 shows the number of female and male that participated in the research.

Table 3: Respondents' Age

S/N	Age	Number of Respondents	Percentage Rate
1	18 – 30	184	48.80%
2	31 – 50	134	35.54%
3	51 and above	59	15.64%
	Total	377	99.98%

The table above shows that more of young people participated in the study

Table 4: Mean (\bar{x}) analysis of influence of billboard political advertising on residents

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Total	Mean	Remark
		4	3	2	1		(\bar{x})	
1	Billboard political advertisement influences my decision to vote for a particular candidate.	108 432	159 477	69 138	41 41	377 1088	2.88	Agree
2	Billboard political advertisement is not the only factor that influences my decision to vote for a candidate	138 552	94 282	80 160	65 65	377 1059	2.80	Agree
3	Billboard political advertisement did not in any way influence my perception and voting for any candidate	87 348	49 147	136 272	105 105	377 872	2.31	Disagree
4	I am indifferent about billboard political advertisement because it is mere political activity that does not translate to good government	128 512	132 396	72 144	45 45	377 1097	2.90	Agree

The table above shows that Port Harcourt City residents agreed with a mean score of 2.88, 2.80 and 2.90 respective that billboard political advertisement influence perception and voting for a particular candidate but disagreed that billboard did not influence their decision with a mean score of 2.31

Table 5: Mean (\bar{x}) analysis of extent of believability of Political advertisement.

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Total	Mean	Remark
		4	3	2	1		(\bar{x})	
1	I believe billboard political advertisement to a very high extent which changed my perception and made me vote for a particular candidate.	47 188	32 96	138 276	160 160	377 720	1.90	Disagree
2	I believe billboard political advertisement to a high extent which changed my perception and made me vote for a particular candidate.	100 400	83 249	110 220	84 84	377 953	2.53	Agree
3	My belief to billboard political advertisement is low and did not change my perception about voting for a candidate.	101 404	127 381	61 122	88 88	377 995	2.63	Agree
4	My belief to billboard political advertisement is very low and did not change my perception about voting for a candidate.	0 0	0 356	178 199	199 199	377 555	1.47	Disagree

Table 5 above indicates that respondent's believability to political advertisement about candidate is moderate, which is to say that respondents agreed that believability to political advertisement is high with a mean score of 2.53 and also agreed that their believability level is

low with a mean score of 2.63 but disagreed that believability levels are very high and very low with a mean score of 1.90 and 1.47 respectively.

Table 6: Mean (\bar{x}) Analysis of other factors that can influence Mobilization and participation in 2023 general election.

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Total	Mean	Remark
		4	3	2	1		(\bar{x})	
1	My level of importance to billboard political advertisement is very high	61	25	157	134	377	2.03	Disagree
		244	75	314	134	767		61
2	My level of importance to billboard political advertisement is high	127	78	116	56	377	2.73	Agree
		508	234	232	56	1030		
3	My level of importance to billboard political advertisement is low	101	127	61	88	377	2.63	Agree
		404	381	122	88	995		
4	My level of importance to billboard political advertisement is very low	84	49	136	105	377	2.31	Disagree
		348	147	272	105	872		

The above table shows that respondents' level of importance to billboard political advertisement is not that high, this is because billboard advertisement does not translate to performance.

Discussion of Findings

Research Question 1: What influence does billboard political advertisement has on Port Harcourt City resident's perception and voting in 2023 general?

The table 4 above shows that Port Harcourt City residents agreed with a mean score of 2.88, 2.80 and 2.90 respective that billboard political advertisement influence perception and voting for a particular candidate but disagreed that billboard did not influence their decision with a mean score of 2.31.a study by Edegoh, Ezebuenyi and Asemah (2013), showed that exposure to political advertising influences voters' preference for advertised candidate. Another study by Ijeh (2011), political advertising influences voters more especially when laced with cultural elements.

Research Question 2: What is the extent to which Port Harcourt residents believe billboard political advertisement messages to influence their voting in the 2023 general election?

Table 5 above indicates that respondent's believability to political advertisement about candidate is moderate, which is to say that respondents agreed that believability to political advertisement is high with a mean score of 2.53 and also agreed that their believability level is low with a mean score of 2.63 but disagreed that believability levels are very high and very low with a mean score of 1.90 and 1.47 respectively. This signal shows that it not only political

advertising that makes a voter cast his or her vote for a candidate other element are inclusive, according to Ijeh (2011), cultural elements like, music, chieftaincy titles, visits by candidates to traditional rulers for endorsement in political advertising contribute to voters' goodwill towards a candidate.

Research Question 3: What is the level of importance attached to billboard political advertisement by Port Harcourt City LGA residents?

The above table 6 shows that respondents' level of importance to billboard political advertisement is not that high, this is because billboard advertisement does not translate to performance. In as much as advertising on the whole influence people but much importance is not attached to billboard political advertising by residents of Port Harcourt City LGA.

Findings of the Study

It was discovered that:

1. billboard political advertisement influence voters' perception about a candidate, which translated to vote in the 2023 general election
2. believability of political advertised candidate does not depend on advertising alone but also on other factors.
3. Port Harcourt do not attach much importance to billboard political advertisement in the 2023 general election.

Conclusion

This study investigated billboard political advertisement and the electorate perception and voting in 2023 general elections in Port Harcourt City LGA, three research questions were used to guide the study, Agenda Setting theory was used to anchor the study and the survey method was used in the study. Therefore, the study concludes that in the last 2023 general election billboard political election played its role in influencing electorates' perceptions and votes but it was not the only element that compelled people to vote on Election Day.

Recommendation

1. Political parties, government and political candidates should keep using advertisement to promote their parties, policies and candidates
2. Political parties should do more to make people believe in their political advertisement by fielding credible candidates to increase believability.

3. More value should be placed on billboard advertisement by candidates in terms of creativity and captions, to ensure more importance is attached to it.

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