



CANDIDATE PERSUASIVE SKILLS AND VOTERS DECISION IN 2015 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION IN NIGERIA: A CASE STUDY OF LAGOS STATE

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Abstract

Persuasive communication has become part and parcel of political communication. In electoral campaign persuasion is used to the fullest by political party and candidate to influence the electorate to vote in a certain way. Source credibility is also important in determining the success of political party / candidate. Source credibility is determined by many factors which include personality competence, expertness, and trustworthiness. This paper therefore investigates persuasive skills of candidates in the Nigeria 2015 presidential election to change voter's decision in Lagos State. Survey method was used to elicit responses of 320 respondents selected through systematic random sampling technique. Five research questions were posed. Findings revealed that many factors including geo-ethnic affiliation, monetary/material inducement, desire for change among others influenced respondents vote during the presidential election. The paper recommends that the electorate should understand its power to change government through the ballot paper.

Keywords: *Persuasive Communication, Electoral Campaign, Political Party, Candidate, Source Credibility, 2015 Presidential Election, Voter's Decision.*

Introduction

Persuasion is an important part of daily life of every human being. The goods and services purchased for use, the music we listen to and who we vote for in an election are all behaviours that are formed and continue to be maintained through persuasive communication. The Greek made persuasion a foundation of their early democracies (Bettinghaus, 1980), because it is considered a potent tool that people use to achieve change. Persuasion has attained greater importance today in political communication more than ever before.

A political party or candidate seeking vote today has to make a conscious effort at influencing the thoughts or actions of the electorate with a view to changing his/her belief, attitude and behaviour to act in a way desired by the party/candidate. Electoral campaign is now loaded with persuasive messages to elicit the interest of electorate. In promoting political candidates, party manifestoes, government policy and directions, persuasive communication is often use. Persuasive communication is a conscious attempt by one individual to change the attitudes, beliefs, or behaviour of another individual or group of individuals through the transmission of some message (Bettinghaus and Cody, 1987).

Electoral campaign in the 2015 General elections was marked by persuasive communication by the various political party and candidates particularly, presidential candidates. Persuasive messages reflected in rallies, radio and television programmes, advertising media, political advertising, public relations and media of mass communication used for their campaigns.

Fourteen political parties contested for the presidential election. They include: Action Alliance (AA), Allied Congress Party of Nigeria (ACPN), Alliance for Democracy (AD), African Democratic Congress (ADC), African People's Alliance (APA), All Progressives Congress (APC), Citizens' Popular Party (CPP), Hope Democratic Party (HDP), KOWA, National Conscience Party (NCP), Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), Peoples Party of Nigeria (PPN), United Democratic Party (UDP), United Progressive Party (UPP). Of the fourteen, two remained outstanding: All Progressives Congress (APC) and Peoples Democratic Party (PDP).

This paper therefore sought to investigate the use of persuasive skills of the fourteen presidential candidates in the Nigeria 2015 general election in Lagos State. The population of study was the entire residents of Lagos State. A Sample size of 320 was selected through systematic random sampling technique. Four local governments were also selected out of the 20 local governments in Lagos State through the same technique. Survey method was



employed for the study and data were gathered through questionnaire which was the instrument of data collection for the study.

Research Questions

1. What was Lagos State residents' perception of mass media coverage of electoral campaigns during the 2015 presidential election?
2. Did mass media's coverage of electoral campaigns affect Lagos State residents voting during the 2015 presidential election?
3. Which mass medium did Lagos State residents regard as fair and balanced in the coverage of 2015 electoral campaigns in Lagos State?
4. What other factors influenced Lagos State residents' voting decision during the 2015 presidential election?
5. Which political factors influenced Lagos State residents consider mature and issue-oriented in mass media electoral campaigns?

Conceptual Review

One fundamental way of effecting change in society is persuasion. Persuasion takes place when one attempts to influence the behavior of others. Politicians, government and civil society groups exploit persuasive communication to change the attitudes, beliefs, values, and actions of people. Traders also use persuasion to draw attention of potential customers.

When political party campaigns for election, it is persuading the electorate toward the party and its candidates, when a political candidate also asks for vote from the electorate, he's trying to change the attitude of the people towards him/herself. Persuasive communication has therefore become part and parcel of political communication particularly during electoral campaign. 'Bettinghaus (1980) defines persuasion as a conscious effort aimed at influencing the thoughts and actions of a receiver. Perloff (2003) goes further to define persuasion as a symbolic process which a communicator make to convince other people to change their attitudes or behaviour regarding an issue through the transmission of a message, in an atmosphere of free choice

Electoral campaigns determine who will represent us in national and state assemblies and even the president to know who will move the country forward. Electoral campaigns require serious planning and strategy of delivery by politicians and political parties. Political candidate and political party could use political rally, house-to-house channel or mass media or a combination of all through publicity and political advertising to reach the electorate. The persuasive strategies that could be deployed for electoral campaigns include the following as suggested by Perloff (2003)

1. **Develop a core set of positions that spring from a political philosophy.** In 2015, General Buhari harped on eradication of corruption, insurgency and impunity in every sector to win the 2015 election.
2. **Communicate a vision through strategic use of media.** The message, a centerpiece of persuasive communication, is of central importance in politics. The level of corruption of politicians at the state and federal levels in Nigeria under the last administration was unimaginable. The message by Muhammadu Buhari that he would deal with corruption headlong attracted the interest of Nigerians.
3. **Market an Image.** Image marketing of political candidates is now done by the mass media through political public relations and political advertising. Voters rely on the image presented through Tv and other media. Images are never entirely accurate, however for instance, the image of General Muhammadu Buhari presented on the Nigerian Television Authority, (NTA) and Africa Independent Television (AIT) as a strict person who was likely to put corrupt people in jail did not deter voters from voting him to office as president in the 2015 General elections.
4. **Make a personal, emotional, connection with people.** Despite negative political advertising in the mass media against General Buhari during the 2015 electoral campaign, he (Buhari) connected with people in other media, including the new media with the message that he would rescue the ailing



economy and put an end to corruption. There is no doubting the fact that forging personal and strong emotional connections with sympathetic voters earned him political success in the election.

5. **Appeal persuasively to undecided voters.** One means of winning election in modern period is to appeal persuasively to undecided voters. This kind of voters does not need political gaffes and window dressing. Rather, candidates must go straight forward to appeal to the conscience and sentiment of the voters. Candidates should also tailor different messages to diverse audience subgroups.

The communication situations are also important. In the current study, the communication situation was the 2015 presidential election campaign in Nigeria. The important issues during the campaign were, corruption, mismanagement of the economy, unemployment of educated youths, insecurity occasioned by Boko Haram insurgency, kidnapping etc. the degree of impunity in the country which necessitated the slogan “change” by a political party. The common factors in persuasion as highlighted by Bettinghans (ibid) include

- Similarities and differences between sources and receivers,
- Variations in the content of messages
- Variations in message organization or style,
- Differences in the channels used to transmit persuasive messages
- Differences in the nature of the situation in which persuasion takes place.

As a matter of fact, mass media are indispensable avenues for political parties /candidates to reach a large percentage of the electorate who would otherwise have been unreachable by political campaign messages delivered at rallies. The mass media through reportage of electoral campaigns and airing of political advertisements have the potential of influencing voting decisions of the electorate (Obot, 2013).

Much of the information needed during campaign comes in form of persuasion. Majority of messages of persuasion also comes from political advertising, public relations and mass media. Rivers, Peterson & Jensen (1971) once noted that the mass media carry three types of persuasive content. They listed them as (1) advertising, which is treated, along with public relations; (2) intentional advocacy, which often appears as editorials, editorial cartoons, columns and interpretive articles intended to lead the reader to a conclusion, and; entertainment or information, with persuasion as possible by-product. They also note that, "As the mass media have moved to a pivotal position in elections, political public relations, which includes political advertising, has grown important" (p246). They attributed the success of Richard Nixon in the 1968 Presidential Election (USA) to the shrewd way he used television. They went further to say the success recorded attracted public interest to the three men who guided Nixon -Roger Ailes, Harry Treleaven, and Al Scottf who received many offers after the election. One can also say that political advertising among other things especially the goodwill generated by philanthropic gesture of MKO Abiola was responsible for winning the June 12, 1993 annulled presidential election in Nigeria.

The 2015 presidential campaign reflected these factors to a large extent. The two most popular candidates, incumbent President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and General Muhammadu Buhari of the All Progressives Congress (APC) were indeed different in outlook, style, antecedent, perceived ability and capability to move Nigeria forward and effect desirable change. The two presidential candidates went round the country in the course of electoral campaign, appealing for votes. General Muhammadu Buhari harped his message on eradication of corruption, and impunity, generation of employment and total end to Boko Haram insurgency.() President Goodluck Jonathan emphasized his achievements so far and pledged to continue in the same direction.

Nigerians who listened to the messages of the two major candidates were affected by the content of the message, though differently as predicted by Bettinghaus (Ibid). But of paramount importance is the source credibility which is borne out of each candidate’s personal character as identified by Aristotle (cited in Bettinghaus, p. 89):

This is true generally whatever the question is, and absolutely true where exact certainty is impossible and opinions are divided. It is not true, as some writers assume in their treatises on rhetoric, that the personal goodness revealed by the speaker contributes



nothing to his power of persuasion; on the contrary, his character may almost be called the most effective means of persuasion he possesses.

Source credibility is dependent on the perceptions that receivers have. Put differently, source credibility is a set of perceptions about source held by receivers. Several scholars have offered suggestions as to how credibility can be formed by receivers. Hovland, Janis, and Kelley (1953) suggest two factors for determining source credibility. These are competence and expertness ascribed to the source by the receiver, and the trustworthiness the receiver ascribes to the source (Ibid). Andersen (1961) opines that credibility depends on dynamism and evaluative factors. McCroskey (1968) holds that receivers judge credibility by perceived authoritative and character. In his study of television newscasters, Markham (1968) offered three factors for judging credibility of source by receivers. These are reliability, showmanship and trustworthiness. Findings from a study carried out by Berlo, Lemert, and Mertz (1966) pointed at three factors by which people judge whether a source is credible or not. The factors are safety, qualification, and dynamism. The 'safety' factor is similar to 'trustworthiness' factor earlier identified by Hovland, Janis and Kelley and Markham. The qualification factor is also similar to expertness of Hovland and his associate and like McCroskey's authoritative factor.

From the studies and findings of the scholars discussed above, there is general agreement on the existence of a safety or trustworthiness factor and a qualification or competence factor. There is, however discussion of dynamism factor identified by Berlo, Lemert and Mertz (ibid) which is similar to McCroskey, Jensen and Valencia's composure, sociability and extroversion factors.

Based on the above discussion of source credibility, there seems to be general agreement among researchers that source credibility is an important variable in persuasion. This perhaps explains variation in the degree of credibility attached to presidential candidates of All Progressives Congress (APC) and Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) in the 2015 General elections in Nigeria by the electorate. Nigeria was believed to be going through serious economic and security challenges. Corruption had eaten deep into the fabric of the society and the incumbent administration headed by President Goodluck Jonathan seemed to be helpless or incapable of dealing with the cankerworm. If it is true that credibility is a set of perceptions about sources held by receivers, that more Nigerians believed, trusted and therefore ascribed credibility to a particular party and candidate during the electoral campaign boosted the votes for the victorious party which was believed to possess the capability to eradicate corruption, put an end to terrorism in the northern part of Nigeria, provide solution to epileptic power supply and provide employment to the teeming unemployed Nigeria youths.

Going by his antecedent, Nigerians ascribed more credibility to the competence, expertness, and strong character of Muhammadu Buhari than the incumbent President Goodluck Jonathan of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) in the 2015 general elections. This belief is in tandem with Burgoon's assertion:

...a composite picture of a 'high credible' source would be someone who is moderately competent, highly sociable, of good character, moderately composed and near neutral on extroversion.. more specifically, the ideal source would be highly (i.e., near the extreme) responsible, reliable, honest, just, kind, cooperative, nice, pleasant, sociable, cheerful, friendly, good natured, and relaxed and only slightly (i.e near neutral) expert, virtuous, refined, calm, composed, verbal, mild, extroverted, bold, and talkative (Burgoon, 1976).

Since he was overthrown as head of a military administration on August 27, 1985, General Muhammadu

Buhari was believed to have been living a good, moderate, incorruptible life with strong character. He therefore fits into the change being canvassed by his political party, All Progressives Congress and other progressive elements in Nigeria. As a result of his antecedent, General Buhari enjoyed a lot of goodwill during the electoral campaign. This translated to success for him during the election.

Theoretical Framework

The study is anchored on social exchange theory and psychological campaign model. Social exchange theory provides a platform to understand the behavior of people in interactional situation and to be better able to predict those actions. The theory based on the assumption that people will act in accordance with economic principles,



making decisions based on an analysis of the perceived costs and perceived benefits. The theory is aware that not everyone will behave in exactly the same way when confronted by the same situation. One person may be willing to take large risks, while another attempt to maintain a current position. This was exactly what happened in the 2015 presidential election in Nigeria. The message “change the government at the centre headed by Dr. Goodluck Ebele Jonathan” was accepted by some, while others believed it was a risk and therefore preferred to maintain the status quo by voting the incumbent government which eventually lost the election.

The social exchange theory grew out of the work of social psychologists and interpersonal communication researchers particularly, Homans, (1961) and Blau (1964). Social exchange theory therefore considers human behaviour to be like money, goods and services. The theory says behaviour can be offered for exchange, and the vendor and the buyer take into account the “cost” of the behaviour and the “reward” associated with the behaviour. Just as learning theory assumes that the amount of the reward offered is directly related to the probability that a response will be made, social exchange theory assumes that the strength of the reward is responsible for the way in which the individual will behave. Social exchange theory believes that behaviour with high cost will occur.

Closely related to social exchange theory is psychological campaign model which better explains the input of campaign to change behaviour. This model emphasizes that one cannot expect a campaign to change behaviour instantly. Change occurs gradually, in stages., The exponents of this model, Prochaska and his associates believe that people progress through different stages of change, including precontemplation, during which they are not aware they have a psychological problem, to contemplation, in which they realize the need to make a change in behaviour, to action, in which they actually modify risky behaviours (Prochaska, etal 1992). During this period persuasive communications are deployed to the needs of people at a particular stage. At the precontemplation stage, the message is meant to convince the people that their behaviours (continued vote for a particular party over years) put them and generation unborn at risk, while messages directed at contemplators stage encourage them to substitute a new behaviour, voting a new political party and new candidate for the risky old candidate and political party whose success could put the country in economic mess. This was the position on 28th March 2015 when Nigerians decided to change the president of the country through election. For the first time, a sitting president was voted out and in response to the wave of change all over the world particularly, the Arab world. The incumbent President Jonathan warmly conceded defeat to the opposition APC candidate, General Muahmmadu Buhari.

2015 Presidential Election Result

Fourteen political parties contested for the 2015 presidential elections in Nigeria. In Lagos State (South Western Nigeria), three political parties had significant presence in the State. They were: the incumbent Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), All Progressives Congress (APC), National Conscience Party (NCP). The 14 political parties that took part in the 2015 presidential election are; AA, ACPN, AD, ADC, APA, APC, CPP, HDP, KOWA, NCP, PDP, PPN, UDP, UPP. The total votes scored by the parties are; AA: 22,877; ACPN: 39,639; AD: 30, 288; ADC: 29,885; APA: 52,448; APC: 15,426,921; CPP: 35, 445; HDP: 7, 307; KOWA: 10,735; NCP: 23, 868; PDP: 12,853,162; PPN: 24,336; UDP: 9, 927; UPP: 18,179 (National Mirror April 1, 2015, p. 14)

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Table 1: Mass Medium Frequently Accessed During 2015 General Elections

Mass medium	Number of Respondents	%
Newspapers	80	25
Newsmagazines	20	6.3
Radio	120	37.5
Television	100	31.2
Total	320	100%



Table 1 above shows that 80 respondents (representing 25%) frequently accessed newspapers during the 2015 general elections, 20 respondents (representing 6.3%) had access to Newsmagazines during the 2015 general elections, 120 respondents (representing 37.5%) had access to Radio; while 100 respondents representing (31.2%) had access to Television during the 2015 general elections.

Table 2: Respondents Assessment of Mass Media Coverage of 2015 Presidential Electoral Campaigns In Lagos State.

Option	Number of Respondents	%
Very satisfactory	82	25.6
Satisfactory	120	37.5
Very unsatisfactory	36	11.3
Unsatisfactory	30	9.4
No opinion	52	16.2
Total	320	100%

Table 2 shows that 82 (25.6%) of the respondents considered mass media's coverage of electoral campaigns during 2015 general elections as "Very satisfactory", 120 (37.5%) of the respondents assessed it as "Satisfactory", 36 (11.3%) considered it as "Very Satisfactory", 30 (9.4%) of the respondents indicated that mass media's coverage of electoral campaigns was "unsatisfactory", while 52(16.2%) of the respondents expressed no opinion. Generally, 212 respondents representing (63.1%) were satisfied with mass media's coverage of electoral campaigns in Lagos State, 66 of them representing (20.7%) were not satisfied, while 52 respondents (representing 16.2%) had no opinion.

Table 3: Respondents' Major Source of Information for Voting Decision During 2015 General Elections.

Mass medium	Number of Respondents	%
NTA	56	17.5
AIT	89	27.8
Radio Nigeria	41	12.8
Faji FM Radio	61	19.1
National newspapers	50	9,1
Party /friends/opinion leaders	33	7.2
Total	320	100%

Table 3 shows that 48 (17.5%) of the respondents listed NTA as their major source of information for voting decision during 2015 general elections, 89 (27.8%) respondents listed AIT Television as their major source of information for voting decision, 41 (12.8%) of the respondents listed Radio Nigeria, 61(19.1%), respondents listed FAJI FM Radio as their major source of information, 50 (15.6%) respondents listed National newspapers as their major source of information, while 23 (7.2%) respondents listed party, friends & opinion leaders as their major source of information.

Table 4: Media House Adjudged best in providing electoral campaign information

Mass medium	Number of Respondents	%
NTA	48	15
AIT	62	19.3
Radio Nigeria	76	23.8
Faji FM Radio	84	26.3
National newspapers	50	15.6
Total	320	100%



Table 4 indicates that 48 (15%) of the respondents adjudged NTA best in providing electoral campaign information, 62 (49.3%) respondents listed AIT best, another 76(23.8%) respondents listed Radio Nigeria 1, 84 (26.3%) respondents listed FAJI FM Radio as best in providing electoral campaign information, while 50 (15.6%) of the respondents adjudged national newspapers as best.

Table 5: Factor Which Made Respondents Satisfied With Coverage of Electoral Campaigns

Option	Number of Respondents	%
Balance and fairness	60	19
Impartiality and non-partiality	62	19
Equal access and opportunity for all political parties	58	18
Non-offensive contents in campaign reports	54	17
Offensive contents in campaign reports	86	27
Total	320	100%

Table 5 shows that 60 (19%) of the respondents listed "balance and fairness" as reason for their satisfaction with the coverage of electoral campaign, 62 (19%) of the respondents listed "impartiality and non-partisan ship " as reason for their satisfaction with coverage of 2015 electoral campaign, 58 (18%) respondents mentioned "Equal access and opportunity for all political parties", as reason for their satisfaction with coverage of 2015 electoral campaign 54 (20%) of the respondents mentioned "non-offensive contents in reporting campaigns" as reason for their satisfaction while 86 respondents (27%) listed offensive intents in campaign reports as reason for their dissatisfaction.

Table 7: Factors Which Made Respondents Most Dissatisfied With Coverage Of Electoral Campaign By The Affected (Above Media House).

Options	Number of Respondents	%
Lack of balance and fairness	64	20
Partiality and partisanship	61	19.1
Lack of equal access and equal opportunity for political parties and aspirants	51	15.9
Airing/publication of offensive electioneering contents	94	29.4
All of the above	50	15.6
Total	320	100%

Table 7 shows 64 respondents (20%) listed "lack of balance and fairness" as the reason for their dissatisfaction with the affected media house, 61 (19.1%) respondents listed "partiality and partisanship" as the reason for their dissatisfaction, 51 (15.9%) respondents mentioned "lack of equal access and equal opportunity for all political parties and aspirants" as reason for their dissatisfaction, 94 (29.4%) respondents listed "Airing/publication of offensive electioneering contents" as reason for their dissatisfaction, while 50 respondents (15.6%) mentioned all the options as reasons for their dissatisfaction.

Table 8: Reason why respondents voted during the 2015 General Election

Options	Number of Respondents	%
Belief that votes would count	64	20
Obligation to civic responsibility	81	25.3
Desire for change in government	93	29.1
Loyalty to political party	18	5.6
Persuasiveness of Public Enlightenment messages in the mass media	64	20
Total	320	100%



Table 8 shows that 64 (20%) respondents said they voted during the general elections because of their "belief that votes would count" during the 2015 General elections, 81 (25.3%) respondents said they voted because they considered it their civic responsibility to do so, 93 (29.1%) respondents said they voted for a change in government, 18 respondents (5.6%) voted due to their loyalty to their political party, while another 64 (3.6%) respondents voted as a result of the "persuasiveness of the public enlightenment messages in the mass media."

Table 9: Elections in Which Respondents Voted

Election	Number of Respondents	%
National Assembly Election	92	28.75
Presidential Election	99	30.938
Governorship Assembly Elections	76	23.75
All the Elections	53	16.563
Total	320	100%

Table 9 shows that 126 (39.4%) respondents said they voted during the Presidential/National Assembly Elections, 76 (23.2%) respondents said they voted during the Governorship and State Assembly elections, while 118 (39.9%) respondents voted in all the elections.

Table 10: Factor Which Influenced Respondents To Vote For The Political Party And Presidential Candidate Of Their Choice.

Options	Number of Respondents	%
Geo-ethnic affiliation	41	12.81
Monetary/material inducement	18	5.63
Protest against incumbent candidate /ruling party	62	19.38
General acceptability of the candidate	66	20.63
Party's manifesto	21	6.56
Good antecedent of the candidate	62	19.38
Attractiveness of party's media campaign messages	50	16.63
Total	320	100%

Table 10 indicate that 41 (12.81%) respondents said they voted for the political party of their choice because of geo-ethnic affiliation, 18 (5.62%) respondents said they did so because of monetary/material inducement, 62 (19.38%) respondents voted in protest against incumbent political party/candidate, 66 (20.62%) respondents said they voted because of the general acceptability of the candidate, 21 (6.56%) respondents said they voted because of the party's manifesto, 62 (19.38%) respondents said they were influenced to vote based on the good antecedent of the candidate, while 50 (15.63%) respondents were influenced by the attractiveness of the Party's media campaign messages.

Table 11: Political Party /Presidential Candidate Adjudged Mature, Competent And Non-Offensive In Electoral Campaign During 2015 General Election.

Political party/presidential candidate	Number of Respondents	%
AA (Action Alliance) Mr. Tunde Anifowoshe Kelani	12	3.75
ACPN (Allied Congress Party of Nigeria) Ganiyu Galadima	11	3.44
AD (Alliance for Democracy) Rafiu Salau	10	3.33
ADC (African Democratic Congress) Mani Ibrahim Ahmad	17	5.31



APA (African Peoples Alliance) Alhaji Adebayo Musa Ayeni	16	5
APC (All Progressives Congress) General Muhammadu Buhari	57	17.61
CPP (Citizens' Popular Party) Chief Sam Eke	9	2.61
HDP (Hope Democratic Party) Ambrose Albert Owuru	20	6.2
KOWA (Prof. Comfort Oluremi Sonaiya)	23	7.19
NCP (National Conscience Party) Chief Martins Onoro	26	8.41
PDP (Dr. Goodluck Ebele Jonathan)	48	15
PPN (Peoples Party of Nigeria) Allagoa Chinedu.	14	4.38
UDP (United Democratic Party) Godson Okoye	18	5.63
UPP (United Progressive Party) Dr. Chekwas Okorie	11	3.44
NONE	28	8.70
Total	320	100%

Table 11 shows that 12 (3.75%) respondents listed AA (Action Alliance) as the political party which was mature, peaceful, issue-based and non-offensive in electioneering campaign. 11 (3.44%) respondents mentioned ACPN (Allied Congress Party of Nigeria), 10 (3.33%) respondents listed AD (Alliance for Democracy), 17 (5.31%) respondents mentioned ADC (African Democratic Congress), 16 (5%) respondents listed APA (African People's Alliance), 57 (17.61) respondents listed APC (All Progressives congress), 9 (2.61%) respondents mentioned CPPC (Citizens' Popular Party); 20 (6.2%) respondents listed HDP ("Hope Democratic Party); 23 (7.19%) respondents listed KOWA,; 26 (8.41%) respondents listed NCP (National Conscience Party); 48 (15%) respondents mentioned PDP (Peoples Democratic Party); 14(4.38%) respondents listed PPN (Peoples Party of Nigeria); 18(5.63%) respondents mentioned UDP (United Democratic Party); 11 (3.44%) respondents listed UPP (United Progressive Party) and 28 (8.10%) respondents did not pick any of the 14 political parties.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of the study suggested that persuasive communication contributed to voters' decision in the 2015 General elections particularly the presidential election. The persuasive skill and credibility of the presidential candidates played a major role in voters' decision. This is evident in response of Lagos state residents who said they voted because of the desire to change, antecedent of presidential contestants and trust or confidence reposed in each of them. Quite a lot of them agreed that the mass media coverage of the campaign assisted them to take decision on whom to vote for.

The media were able to provide space and access for the audience. Of particular interest was the phone-in programmes of FAAJI FM, Radio Nigeria in local language which afforded Lagos residents to participate in such programmes which prepared the minds of others for the election. The study found that both government-owned and private-owned media could be biased given the reaction of respondents that they adjudged AIT, a privately-owned and NTA, a government- owned television stations as bias against opposition parties but in favour of the ruling PDP government.

As democracy becomes the preferred form of government in societies like Nigeria, the mass media would increasingly play indispensable role in the public sphere. As this study revealed, during elections who the people vote for and the voting pattern may be a direct consequence of mass media's coverage of electoral campaigns. However, other factors may intervene either to moderate or neutralize the influence of mass media's coverage of electoral campaigns.

There is no gain saying the fact that as it was in the beginning, persuasion is relevant at anytime to influence and change the attitude of the people. Electoral campaign is more persuasive than confrontation. During election period, political parties/candidates use more of persuasion to win the heart of the electorate and make them (electorate) vote in a certain way to favour their party/candidate. The character of the candidate is paramount in



determining voting decision. The credibility, integrity and the degree to which the electorate trust the candidate also matter. It is recommended that the electorate should understand its power to change bad government and be ready at all times to use its voting power.

In the final analysis, the study recommends that Nigerian media should detach themselves from political coverage by being neutral. The media should avoid immoral gain derived from political advertising in the interest of national interest and social responsibility which enjoins the press to do its job in consideration of national interest. Added to this is the fact that political parties and their candidates should employ more persuasive communication than boastful and divisive messages during campaign.

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