

## **Textual Analysis of 2019 Presidential Election Political Advertisements in Selected Newspapers in Nigeria**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The 2019 general elections in Nigeria gulped the sum of N189 billion Naira, with 73 presidential candidates, 91 registered political parties, 1,088 governorship candidates who contested for 29 states gubernatorial seats, 109 senatorial seats, and 4,680 candidates who contested for 360 House of Representatives seats for 1,558 constituencies and 774 local government areas. The incumbent, All Progressive Congress (APC's) President Muhammadu Buhari defeated the arch rival, People Democratic Party's (PDP), Alhaji Atiku Abubakar with 15,191,847 votes to 11, 262,978 in the February 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2019 presidential election. This study adopted qualitative research method, textualized political campaign advertisements published in selected newspapers and examined development issues, negative "attacks", ethnic, tribal, religious sentiment, hate message, and compliance to APCON code on political advertising. The data obtained were analyzed using the Textual analysis research design. The study revealed that issues based advertisements: economic revival, war against corruption, fight against insurgency, Fulani herdsmen, Boko Haram and kidnapping and banditry issues dominated majority of the creative copies. Other themes analyzed in the study were: religious, ethnic, tribal sentiments, restructuring, negative attack and counter attacks and hate messages. APCON expressed 65 percent level of compliance by advertising agencies, political parties and candidates in submitting artworks for vetting prior to exposure to the public via the media. The study further recommends amongst other suggestions that APCON alongside the electoral umpire, INEC should apply punitive measures by obtaining court judgment to sanction politicians, political parties, third party sponsors and advertising agencies who flouted the laws on political advertising during the last general election, to serve as deterrent to others during subsequent polls.

**KEYWORDS:** Advertising, Nigeria, Political advertisement, 2019 Presidential election, Textual analysis.

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### **I. INTRODUCTION**

Political advertising campaigns are communication packaged by identified sponsors - politicians, political parties, campaigns offices and their third parties targeted at the electorates to persuade and influence them to take favourable action, to win their votes and seize power. The ultimate goal of every political advertising campaign and advertisements is to persuade and influence constituency votes and to win elections (Aduradola & Ojukwu, 2013; Nkamnebe 2003; Nwosu, 2003; Opara, Anuforo & Achor, 2016; Osunbiyi, 2012; Tejuoso, 2011).

Other strategies, apart from political advertising adopted by politicians, and their campaign organizations include: personal contacts, lobbying, public relations, propaganda, political rallies and campaigns (Oliyide, Adeyemi & Gbadeyan, 2011). To further complement political advertising and advertisements, other major political campaign strategies are: political rallies, political debates, political interviews, propaganda, publicity and swaying opinion polls (Ademilokun & Taiwo, 2013; Opeibi, 2009).

Iyengar & Prior (1991) distinguished political advertisement copies from product and commercial artworks, that positivity is the currency of product advert, whereas political advertisers seek vote at any cost, breaking ethics, including a degraded sense of public regard for opponents and the electoral process. Unique selling proposition (USP) and appeals such as fear and celebrity endorsement serves as differentiating elements in political advertisements (Onwuamalam, 2014 p. 15).

Notable researchers such as: Goldstein & Freedman (2002), Lau & Sigelman, (2000), and Opeibi, (2006) wrote on the taxonomy and classified political advertising into: (a) Contrast adverts — containing negative information about the opposition and position statements about the preferred candidate (b) Plain political adverts which provides positive information about the candidate and no mention of the opponent and (c) attack or negative adverts — that contain only negative information about the opposition and nothing positive about the opponent. Okpara, Anuforo and Achor (2016) further listed five typologies of political advertising as follows: (a)

attack/negative advert (b) contrast advert (c) pure and clean purpose advert (d) Image advert and (e) Issues adverts. Udeze and Akpan (2003) corroborated this and classified political advertising into two groups, image advert and issue advert.

To this extent, Opeibi (2006) disclosed that attack/negative advertising surfaced like a fresh of pan in Nigeria during the 2<sup>nd</sup> Republic in August 1983 election, National Party of Nigeria (NPN) and Late Alhaji Shehu Shagari were re-elected and opposition parties were Late Chief Obafemi Awolowo's Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN), Late Aminu Kano's People Redemption Party (PRP), Late Dr. Nnamdi Azikwe's Nigeria Peoples Party (NPP), Late Tunji Braithwaite's Nigeria Advance Party (NAP) and Late Waziri Ibrahim's Greater Nigeria People's Party (GNPP). The 1993 presidential election during the 3<sup>rd</sup> Republic further aggravated the use of attack/negative advertisements but still on a very low scale. During the 4<sup>th</sup> Republic, Ademilokun (2015) posit that "apart from the traditional means of campaign such as print medium advertisements, there is now the use of various digital platforms such as: Face book, Twitter, You Tube, Instagram, among others for political campaigns" with attendant increase in attacks / negative advertisements (p.3).

Salman (2016 p.1) noted that President Muhammadu Buhari's All Progressive Congress (APC) and his support groups led by the party chieftains, Senator Bola Tinubu, Mr. Rotimi Amaechi, former Governor of Rivers State, Mr. Babatunde Fashola, former Governor of Lagos State, among others collectively spent 724,540,609 on newspapers advertisements, while former President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan's People Democratic Party (PDP), the then incumbent and his supporters groups such as TAN spent 3,111,357,876 Naira during the 2015 Presidential elections. It was the first time Nigeria witnessed an opposition candidate defeated an incumbent regime. PDP's President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan (GEJ) handed over power to APC's Muhammadu Buhari after 16 years saddle of the former party in power. The figures for political advertisements further rose astronomically during the 2019 general elections.

This study therefore examined political advertisements published in selected Nigerian newspapers during the 2019 presidential election campaign and indentified development issues: negative attacks, ethnic, tribal, religious sentiments, violent, hate messages and level of compliance to APCON code on political advertising.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The 2019 general election cost Nigeria the sum of N189 billion Naira with 91 registered political parties participating, 73 presidential candidates with different manifestoes and ideologies, 1,068 candidates contested for 29 coveted state governors seats, 1,004 candidate vied contested for 109 senatorial seats, 4,680 candidates for the 360 House of Representatives seats in 1,558 constituencies and 774 local government areas. APC's President Muhammadu Buhari (PMB) retained his seat defeating his arch rival, PDP's Alhaji Atiku Abubakar, former Vice President with 15,191,847 against 11, 262,978 votes in the February 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2019 presidential polls.

Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) disclosed that total registered voters was 84,004,084, and distribution by occupation indicated that civil servants accounted for 5,038,671 of the voters (60%); farming and fishing 13,630,216 (6.23%); housewives 11,844,079 voters (14.10%); public servants 2,292,167 voters (2.73%); students 22,328,9% (26.57%) voters; artisans 4,478,202 voters (5.33%); traders 7, 568,012 voters (9.019%); business men 10,810,000 (12.87%) voters and others 6,021,741 (7.37%). Also, voters distribution by gender was 39,598,645 female voters (47.14%) and 44,405,439 male voters. Distribution by age showed that: middle age (36-50 years) voters were 25,176,144; youths (18-32 years) were 42,938,4582, old (51-70years) were 3,100,971 voters and elderly (70 yrs above) were 12,788,511 voters (The Guardian, 2019).

INEC Chairman, Prof Mahmood Yakubu disclosed that eventual total accredited voters was 29,364,209, total vote cast was 28,614,190, and 27,324,583 votes were declared valid and 1,289,607 votes were declared invalid. PMB for the second term bid won in 19 states while Atiku Abubakar won in 17 states including the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja. PMB won in Osun, Nassarawa, Gombe, Ekiti, Kwara, Yobe, Kaduna, Kogi, Lagos, Jigawa, Bauchi, Niger, Borno, Sokoto, Zamfara, Ogun, Kastina and Kano, while Atiku won in Bayelsa, Adamawa, Delta, Rivers, Cross River, Plateau, Akwa Ibom, Taraba, Anambra, FCT, Ebonyi, Abia, Enugu and Ondo. The Supreme Court of Nigeria, the apex court on Wednesday, October 30<sup>th</sup>, 2019 dismissed the appeal of PDP's Atiku/Obi on the judgment of the Appeal Court on 2019 presidential election outcome.

APC adopted "Next Level" as political campaign slogan as against the popular mantra "Change" that brought the party to power in 2015, while PDP adopted "Better Life for Nigerians and "Atikulute" as slogans. The various political advertising strategies deployed by the two leading parties, APC and PDP included: Out of Home (OOH) such as poster, LED board, street lamp poles, A4 stand campaign board, hat boxes, branded bus stop shelters, branded cars and buses and electronic billboards. Also deployed were: jingles on broadcast media: radio and television, political campaign road shows, advertisements in newspapers and magazines and new media-online advertisements on Facebook, You Tube, Instagram and Twitter using influencers and celebrities' endorsements.

This study seeks to interrogate development issues, negative attacks, ethnic, tribal, religious sentiments, violent and hate messages contained in these published advertisements and level of compliance to APCON's ASP vetting of political advertisements prior to exposure to the public.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The main objective of this study was to examine the application of political advertising to Nigeria's electioneering campaign process in the context of the 2019 Presidential election. The specific objectives of the study were to:

- (1) Ascertain development issues contained in political advertisements published in selected newspapers.
- (2) Analyze the texts in the advertisements which employed ethnic, religious, tribal and sectional sentiments.
- (3) Examine how these political advertisements employed negative/attack strategies in their presentations.
- (4) Investigate these advertisements compliance with appropriate sections of APCON code on political advertising.

### **Research Questions.**

- (1) What are the developmental issues contained in the political advertisements published in the selected newspapers on the 2019 presidential election?
- (2) What texts in these advertisements contained ethnic, religious, tribal and sectional sentiments?
- (3) How did these political advertisements employ negative/attack strategies in their artworks?
- (4) Do these political advertisements comply and conform to APCON's code on political advertising?

## **II. LITERATURE REVIEW**

This review examined relevant concepts: democracy, political advertising, APCON code that regulates political advertising in Nigeria, followed by review of empirical literature and lastly, theoretical framework that this study was built upon.

### **2.1 Conceptual Review**

**Democracy:** The etymology of the word democracy is from two Greek words: demo (people) and Kratos (rule) which means "rule by the people." Abraham Lincoln, USA past President at the dedication of the soldiers' national cemetery in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania declared that "government of the people, by the people, for the people, (democracy) shall not perish from the earth."

Mattes & Bratton (2007 p.192 cited in Batta, Batta & Mboho, 2015) affirm democracy as a system of values and procedures by which leaders, groups and parties compete for power, and in which free and equal people elect representatives to make binding decisions" (p.82).

**Democracy in Nigeria:** The 1<sup>st</sup> civilian Republic, Tafawa Balewa era ended in a military coup led by Major Kaduna Nzeogwu in 1966, and ushered in a devastating civil war and several coups and counter — coups (Egbefo, 2015 p.1). Nigeria witnessed several years of military rule: Aguiyi Ironsi's regime (17<sup>th</sup> January, 1966 to 29<sup>th</sup> July, 1966), Gowon's regime (1966 to 1975), Murtala / Obasanjo's regime (1975 to 1976), soldiers ruled for thirteen years and handed over to NPN's Shehu Shagari democratically elected civilian regime on October, 1<sup>st</sup>, 1979 which lasted for only four years. Gen Buhari/Idiagbon Military regime (31<sup>st</sup> December, 1983 to August 27<sup>th</sup>, 1985), General Babangida's regime (Aug 27<sup>th</sup>, 1985 to Aug 26<sup>th</sup>, 1993) culminated in June 12 democratic imbroglio and subsequent Interim National Govt (ING) of Chief Ernest Shonekan which led to Gen Sanni Abacha maximum dictatorship rule between 1993 to 1988, and Gen Abdulsalami Abubakar regime (9<sup>th</sup> June, 1988 to 29<sup>th</sup> May, 1999).

Nigeria's fourth democratic republic has witnessed six general elections: 1999, 2003, 2007, 2011, 2015 and 2019. According to Batta, Batta & Mboho (2015) semblance of uninterrupted democracy has been witnessed in Nigeria for the past 16 years (1999-2015) and yet democracy cannot be described as consolidated. In their words "a consolidated democracy is the one in which these arrangements develop into permanent, consistent, and autonomous institutions governed by justifiable rules, democratic structures are deployed in effective and impartial fulfillment of legislative, executive, prosecutor and public utility functions" (p.82).

### **2.2 Political Advertising:**

Advertising cut across communications, economics, marketing, psychology, business and commerce, law and politics, in fact, covers the whole of the social sciences, creative arts, humanities and business discipline (Osunbiyi, 1991). Telser (1974) noted that while "the consumer sees advertising functions from the angle that it sells product, (goods, service, ideals and political program) the advertisement technicians focus on how it aids communication.

Skimmer (1990) cited in Osunbiyi (1991) observed further that advertising is an attempt at controlling human behavior by appealing to human conscience and emotions" (p.5).

Politicians' perception of advertising is that it is a marketing tool to be effectively used in persuading voters to win elections. This view of advertising reflects in Omotosho (2019) position that "political advertising contributes its quota to the democracy of any nations, to its contribution to economic well being in a market system guided by moral norms. Political advertising can make its contribution by informing people about the ideas and policy proposals of parties and candidates, including new candidates not previously known to the public (p.22).

Researchers have interrogated the effects of advertising on voters, the forms and variations of negative/attacks, political advertising and the impact of negative/attack advertisements on opponents and choice of electorate or voters' during political campaigns and elections. We shall analyze these studies in-depth.

### **Empirical Literature**

Chang, Park & Shim (1998) investigated the effectiveness of negative political advertising on electorate as regards in formativeness, believability and attitude towards the advertiser. The study used quantitative research method, adopted survey and structured questionnaire as tool of data collection. The study found out that negative political advertising believability has a high positive correlation with favorable attitude towards the target. Pearson Correlation Test was conducted, and in Hypothesis 1 the study discovered that electorates who are likely to believe negative political advertisements tends to have positive attitude toward the sponsor and negative attitude towards the targeted audience (p.12).

Hughes (2003) analyzed negative political advertising, its definitions, features and tactics. The study adopted qualitative research method and found out that the strategy has been used successfully in democracies around the world from Australia to Mexico.

Procter & Schenck — Hamlin (2009) analyzed the form and variations in negative political advertising. The study adopted quantitative research method, using a sample of 99 political advertisements from 1990 statewide and federal elections and content analysis was used to determine whether negative political advertisements displayed a normative style.

The study found out that negative political advertisements were similar in style and substance and used to blunt an opponent's chance of winning election than to promote the sponsoring candidate or advertiser's image or characteristics with their voting constituencies Daignault, Soroka & Giasson (2013 p.90) in their study investigated the immediate and simultaneous effects of positive, negative and mixed content electoral advertisements. The quantitative study presented data from series of pre-test of an experiment design conducted with 31 voters as respondents during the Canadian federal election of April to May 2011. Respondents viewed political advertisements selected for their argumentative content and non-verbal components. The impacts of the advertisements were measured using an innovative multi-method approach, combining physiological and cognitive measures, to evaluate the effects of negative advertising on viewers. The study found out that: (a) negative televised election adverts generally raised attention levels and a greater degree of physiological activation in viewers (voters) when compared with positive or mixed messages (b) participants shows beef-up in cognitive elaboration while watching advertisements of their own political party affiliations (c) participants express more persuasive resistance to negative advertisements campaigns than to positive and mixed advertisements. Both Batta, Batta & Mboho (2015p. 84) and Ekharefo & Akoseogasimle, (2017 p.154) agreed with Diagnault, Soroka & Giasson (2013 p.90) findings that political advertising research hinged on cognitive response approach shows that negative ads produce the greatest counter arguments.

Holt-Bacha, Johansson, Leindeberger, Maarek & Merk (2012 ) analyzed and compared party advertisements that were aired on television during the 2009 European election campaign in France, Germany, Sweden and the UK. The study found out that there is not much variation (in political advertising) and that parties everywhere concentrate their TV advertising on about half a dozen formats. Analysis of electoral advertising in France, Germany Sweden, and the UK revealed cross-country similarities and difference" (p.90).

De run, Weng & Ming (2013 p.82) in their study investigated the use of direct advertisement in advertising Malaysian politics and its effect on voters at Batang Ai, Sarawak area. The study adopted quantitative research design and measured voters' attitude to the advertisement likeability, believability, positive emotional quotient and its effect on actual behavior. A total of 150 respondents were interviewed and data analyzed using descriptive analysis, an independent sample T test, correlation and regression analysis conducted. The findings revealed significant difference between Barisan National and non-Barisan National for all variables except for attitude towards the advertisement. The study cautioned politicians against negative political advertising as it raises more cynicism among voters. The study findings bear more relevance to Nigeria's politics and electioneering campaigns terrain as advertisements with information on development issues relevant to the electorates need to be developed.

Opeibi (2006) conducted study on negative advertising in Nigeria's political discourse. The study adopted quantitative research design and collected data from selected national newspapers and advertisements published during the 2003 general elections. The study found out that voters exhibited different attitudes towards negative political advertisements. Factors such as voters' level of education, political literacy, contents and

structure of the adverts, personality of the sponsor influenced the effect of negative advertisements campaign on the electorate (p.1)

Oliyide, Adeyemi and Gbadeyan (2011) investigated Nigerian electorate perception of political advertising and election campaign. The study adopted quantitative research design using survey with questionnaire as instrument of data collection. The research questions were structured, close ended and two categories of Likert scale, 1 — strongly disagree and 5 — strongly agree were adopted to measure respondents feeling about negative political advertising. The research was conducted a week before the April 25<sup>th</sup>, 2009 re-run election in Ekiti State, Nigeria. Findings revealed that majority of the respondents' feels that political advertising is interesting, effective and negative "attacks" advertising must be discouraged (p.52).

Ademilokun (2016) conducted multi-modal discourse analysis of selected newspapers political campaign advertisements for Nigeria's 2015 elections and analyzed pattern of verbal and non-verbal cues in these political advertisements. The study adopted social semiotic approach of Gunther Krees to analyze data, collected from nine selected advertisements published in Nigerian newspapers between January and March, 2015 at the peak of campaign between APC's Muhammadu Buhari, the eventual winner and PDP's Goodluck Jonathan, the then ruling party. The study findings revealed that producers of political advertisements creatively construct verbal and visual resources to project political aspirants for acceptance by the electorate. That other noticeable discursive tropes in the discourse are counter discourse and brand association" (p.1).

Jacob (2015) analyzed the various roles radio advertising plays as a tool in sustaining Nigeria's democracy. The study adopted qualitative research using historical analyses. Findings indicated that marketers, political candidates and their campaign organizations abuse their freedom of speech and engage in spurious campaigns that undermine societal harmony. The study recommends that the regulatory body, APCON should control political advertisements and implore politicians to deal with issues and avoid negative advertising and references to opponents, other than criticisms of their policies. The media should not because of ownership, political affiliation, and profit purpose broadcast advertisements that are unethical and negative in nature (p.2).

Batta, Batta and Mboho (2015 p.86) in their study conducted content analysis of two prominent newspapers, The Guardian and Punch between January and March, 2015 analyzing political advertising and electioneering campaigns. The study found out that 63 percent of the political advertisements in Nigeria dealt with non- issues and social-cultural issues constituted the majority. Religion, ethnic and sectional sentiments and violence messages occurred at 6.25 percent, 3.89 percent and 1.83 percent in political advert messages. Personal attacks amounted to 41.04 percent and incidence of non-compliance to APCON code of ethics was high at 33.6 percent. Third party sponsors are responsible for 46.56 percent of negative political advertising in Nigeria and usually fail to comply with APCON code to obtain approval for political advertisements creative artworks prior to exposure in the media.

Ekhareafor & Akoseogasimhe (2007 p.168) conducted a study on textual analysis of 2015 presidential election advertisements in selected Nigerian newspapers published between January and March, 2015. Data gathered were analyzed using textual analysis research design. The study found out that regulatory authorities need to be more proactive in the control and regulation of negative attack advertisements, and media owners (NPAN) should insist on adherence to APCON code.

Tejumaiye, Simon & Obia (2018) examined the influence of political advertising in Nigeria's 2015 presidential elections in Lagos state. Information Processing Theory of William McGuire was adopted as the theoretical framework. Survey research method was applied and questionnaire served as instrument of data collection, multistage sampling method was adopted, and 400 respondents were interviewed. The study found out that half of the respondents (49%) confirmed that political advertising was the significant factor that influenced their voting choice of candidate. For respondents who noted that this was not the case, other factors: ethnic consideration, religious beliefs and other considerations were the influences. Political advertising served as reinforcement stimulus and affirm voters' choice rather than act as voting behavior change (p.122).

Araba & Braimah (2015) conducted comparative study of Nigeria's 2011 and 2015 presidential election, to determine the causes responsible for the opposition party winning presidential election for the first time in Nigeria. The study adopted qualitative research design, using comparative analysis by presenting statistical data analysis of both elections. The study found out that the effectiveness of the social media, online advertisement, and the introduction of card readers, a well organized opposition and respect for the peace accord was responsible for the change in power.

APCON expressed some satisfaction with the level of compliance by advertising agencies, political parties and candidates in vetting advertisements before exposing to the public through the mass media in the 2019 presidential election.

According to APCON's Acting Registrar, Mrs. Ijedi Iyoha "so far some are complying while some are not. A good number of them (advertising agencies) are complying. About 65 percent are complying. She added that, advertising agencies and media houses are not expected to collect or expose any materials for advertisement without a receipt of clearance from the Advertising Standard Panel of APCON who vet and approve adverts

before exposure for public consumption. These support groups (3<sup>rd</sup> party sponsors) take their advertisements copies directly to the media for exposure without vetting. We are really having issues with this group of political advertisers. But we are also intensifying our sensitization with the media for support on this” (Daily Independent, 2019).

As rightly observed by Jacob (2015) “most political advertisements in our newspapers and magazines today do not have the regulatory stamp of APCON on them. Neither have they originated from advertising agencies, as there are no registration numbers placed at their edges to signify where they originate. As such, they cannot be said to have gone through vetting process of ASP of APCON. Independent or in-house graphic designers did the adverts. The advertisements are however part of the election campaigns of various political parties and politicians who are connected to one medium or the other through ownership” (p.5).

This study therefore seek to interrogate political campaign advertisements published in selected newspapers during the 2019 presidential election and examine development issues relevant to the electorate, as against personal negative attacks, ethnic, tribal, religious sentiment, hate messages and their compliance to relevant APCON ethical code of advertising practice.

### 2.3 Theoretical Framework

Theory serves as channel through which an accepted body of knowledge is communicated. The two selected theories relevant to this study are: Uses and Gratification Theory (UGT) and Status Conferral Theory. The Uses and Gratification focuses on what the audience do with the media. UGT developed by Blumler & Mc Quail (1969) with their categorization of audience motivation for watching political programs during 1964 election in UK. Blumler, Brown & Mc Quail (1972) wrote that people use (gratify) the media for four major reasons: diversion or escapism, personal relationship, personal identify and surveillance or acting information about the world. Blumler, Brown & Mc Quail were further joined by Guveritch, Haas & Katz (1974) and the six collaboratively researched on how audience gratified mass media. Gratification here refers to satisfaction and reward experienced by the audience after the use of the media.

Pierce (2007) noted that “audience members are responsible for linking gratification with their personal media choice, the media has the ability to compete with each other in order to gain audience satisfaction and true audience is a credible source of information when the media needs to obtain current trends of mass media use” (p.841). Corroborating this, Little John & Foss (2009) noted that people (politicians inclusive) use the media for many purposes, to meet and gratify their needs, for examples, personal and social needs (p.1). **Relevance:** There are four types of gratification (Mc Quail, 2000) which can be related to political advertising, namely: (a) Information: Politicians use the media to create awareness, circulate information and educate constituency voters about their party manifesto, slogan, candidate preference and brand image to win electorate votes. (b) Persona l identity: politicians develop their brand personality, project personal identity, beliefs, philosophy, and views on issues which are sold to the electorate during campaigns, open debate, media interviews on radio, television, newspapers, bill board and new media, such as: Twitter handles, Face book, You Tube, LinkedIn and Instagram (c) Integration and social interaction — refers to gaining insight into other people situations in order to achieve a sense of belonging (d) Entertainments is gratification of the media for the purpose of entertainment, pleasure, enjoyment and escapism.

During electioneering campaigns and rallies, Outside Broadcasting Van (OB) provide music and live coverage of political activities, such as unveiling of party candidate, launching of party logo, party convention and rallies.

Uses and Gratification Theory (UGT) recognizes that audience, especially politicians are active and significant consumers of mass media information and they make deliberate choice among media to gratify themselves. Onuorah (2008) noted that “political advertising is the use of media space or airtime as a means of persuading voters to vote a political party or candidate into power or office” (p.7).

As Onwuamalam (2014) rightly observed “political advertisement set media agenda which provide voters with what to think about (Mc Combs, 1981), presents information to create awareness and influence voters behavior (Oskamps 1984), provide information that facilitate public agenda (Miller, 2003), and make voters engage in debate” (p.16)

**Status Conferral Theory** was propounded by Lazarsfeld and Merton (1948) on the premise that media confers status on people, things and policies. By focusing on a politician or group, the media legitimize the status, enhance prestige and confer authority. Media confer status on an individual (politician) through favorable media attention, frequent reportage, newspaper editorial endorsing a particular candidate and enhanced goodwill and status.

The media focuses and regard these politicians as important personalities, thus accord them ample airtime and space and prominence in news coverage. Sullivan (2018) wrote that “people can become famous and celebrity status can be gained by sheer media coverage. People believe that someone must be important because

the media focuses attention on him or her” (p.1). The media consider three tests: relevance, importance and timelines (RIT) in conferring status. Is the news relevant to the audience? Is it timely? How many people are being impacted? Examples abound of politicians who were relatively unknown before media announcement, framing, positioning, promotion, repetition and status enhancement, and after winning election they become celebrities, opinion leaders and heroes with cut-like followers (Alao, D., Uwom, O. & Alao, A. (2013); Amos (2009); Anaeto, Onabajo & Osifeso, 2008; Otun & Smith, 2018).

Relevance: Nigeria media confer status on politicians and political group by publishing their pictures in prominent positions, featuring them repeatedly in interviews, airing their views and positions on policies, broadcast documentaries on their achievements and special projects on radio and TV. Furthermore, they enhance their status with titles and positions such as: party chieftains, leader and power broker, leading figures, hero of democracy, among other nomenclatures.

### III. METHODOLOGY

This study adopted textual analysis research design to allow for qualitative presentation of the 2019 presidential election advertisements in selected Nigerian newspapers published between November 2018 to March 2019 at the peak of the political electioneering campaign. Textual analysis according to In & Lee (2017) is the principal method for explaining findings, outlining trends and providing contextual information. **Population Samples**

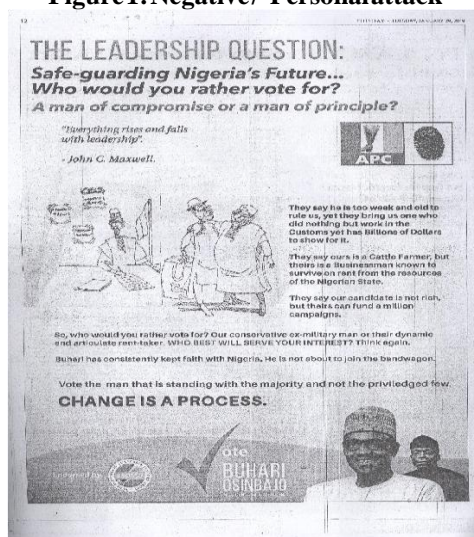
Over 400 advertisements were published during the election campaign period in Nigerian national newspapers. This study covered a period of four months (November 18<sup>th</sup>, 2018 to February 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2019). The choice of this period is because it was the peak of the electioneering campaign. The sample size of this study consists of five political advertisements repeatedly published in selected national newspapers, namely: The Guardian, Vanguard, Punch, This Day, and Sun. The advertisements were selected as they portray the key objectives raised in this study. The textual analysis and issues raised are:

- (1) Negative/personal attack — advertisements message that attack, death — wish, vituperation, and half-truth, demeaning, insulting, and mudslinging, against the person and character of political opponents.
- (2) Hate messages — this refers to political advertisements content that stir-up hatred, vile and venom against political opponents or parties
- (3) Religious sentiment — political advertisements that bother on religious differences (in Nigeria), raised and increase tension amongst Muslims, Christians and traditional faith adherents.
- (4) Ethnic, sectional and tribal issues — this refers to political advertisements or creative copies that pitches one ethnic, tribe, section, regional group against the other, divisive tendencies that is opposite to unifying, integrative, and national interest.

Development issue based content: this refers to political advertisements focused on socio-cultural, political, and economic development issues, culminating into progress of Nigeria in which political advertisers or campaign organizations express their views, suggestions and proffer solutions. Such development issues include: poverty alleviation, employment, anti-corruption fight, infrastructural provision - electricity, rail and highways, privatization policy, education, electoral reforms, judiciary, youths and sports developments, among others.

### IV. DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

**Figure 1: Negative/-Personal attack**



Source: This Day Newspaper, Tuesday, January 29, 2019 p.12

Textual Unit	Analysis
Wordings of Ad	The copy words were simple, with a quote and asked questions.
Theme	Negative and personal attack advertisement
Subject Matter	The advert copy focused on leadership and integrity
Style	The question style approach was adopted
Intention/Interpretation	To discredit PDP Presidential candidate and opponent, Atiku Abubakar. The headline read thus — “The leadership question. Safeguarding Nigeria’s future..... Who would you rather vote for? Denotatively it is issue based, and sought answers to questions of public interest. Connotatively it attacked former Vice President, Atiku Abubakar’s integrity and asked — A man of compromise or a man of principle ?
Use of Pictures	A cartoon of President Buhari at his office desk, with flag of Nigeria, symbol of a patriot, while his opponent, Atiku Abubakar, was depicted in another cartoon fraternizing with a phony businessman.

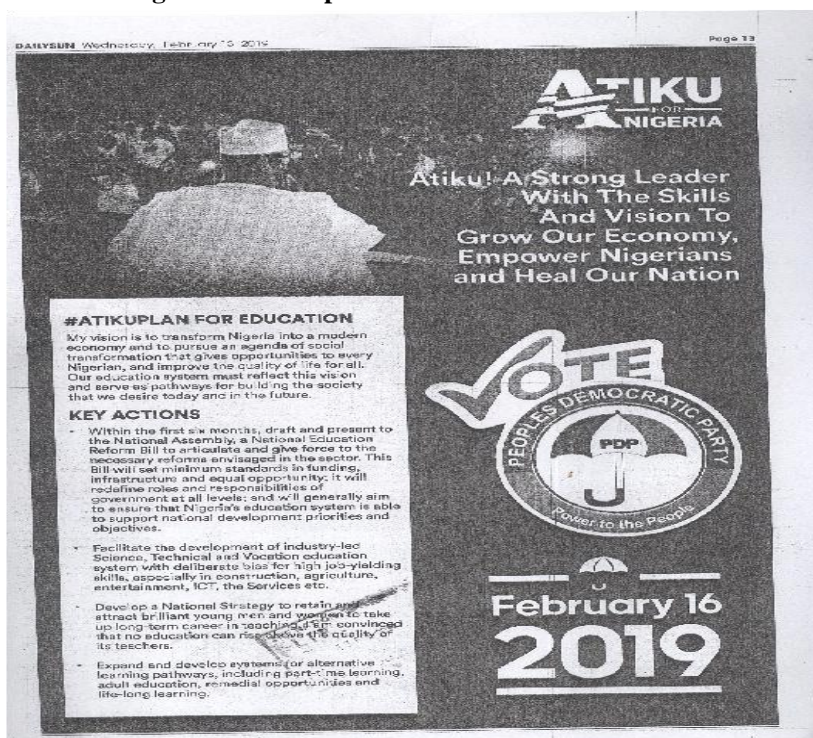
Source: Textual Analysis, 2019

The full page colour advertisement sponsored by Buhari — Osinbajo Corporate Support Group, has “the leadership Question” as its headline. The kicker read thus, “Safeguarding Nigeria’s future, who would you rather vote for?” The copy word asked — A man of compromise or a man of principle?

The advertisement body copy raised three questions against the integrity of former Vice President, Atiku Abubakar, and PDP candidate. They say our candidate is not rich (referring to President Buhari) but theirs (Atiku and PDP) can fund a million campaigns. The say ours is a cattle farmer, but theirs is a businessman known to survive on rent from the resources of the Nigeria state. They say he is too weak and old to rule us, yet the one who did nothing but works in the Customs yet has billion of Dollars to show for it.

The intention of APC is to portray their opponent, the PDP candidate as dishonest and corrupt. “So, who would you rather vote for? Our conservative ex-military man or their dynamic and articulate rent tasker? The advert urged the electorate to vote against a man of compromise and questionable integrity. The pay-off stated, “vote the man (Buhari) that is standing with the majority and not the privilege few”.

Figure 2: Development issue — Education



Source: Daily Sun, Wednesday February 13, 2019 p.13



Textual Unit	Analysis
Wording of Advert	The words were simple and direct, Atiku plan for Education
Theme	Education development- issue based content advertisement
Subject Matter	Issue —based Atiku-Obi Campaign Organization expressed their vision and plan on education
Style	The simple balanced and layout style was adopted.
Intention/Interpretation	To portray Atiku as a strong leader, with the skills and vision to grow Nigeria and heal our nation, garner goodwill, support and votes from electorate during the 2019 presidential election.
Use of Pictures	Atiku Abubakar's picture with Babaringa and cap facing the audience during campaign rally was used, with PDP logo, umbrella and motto: power to the people conspicuously displayed.

Source: Textual Analysis, 2019

The above advertisement placed by PDP showcased Abubakar Atiku's plan for education. A core development issue based advertisement which highlighted "vision to transform Nigeria" into a modern economy and to pursue an agenda of social transformation that gives opportunity to every Nigerian.

In Atiku's word, within the first six months, draft shall be presented to the National assembly, a National Education Reform Bill to facilitate the development of industry-led science, technical and vocation education system with deliberate bias for high job yielding skills, especially in construction, agriculture, entertainment, ICT, and allied service.

**Figure 3: Development issue — Agriculture**

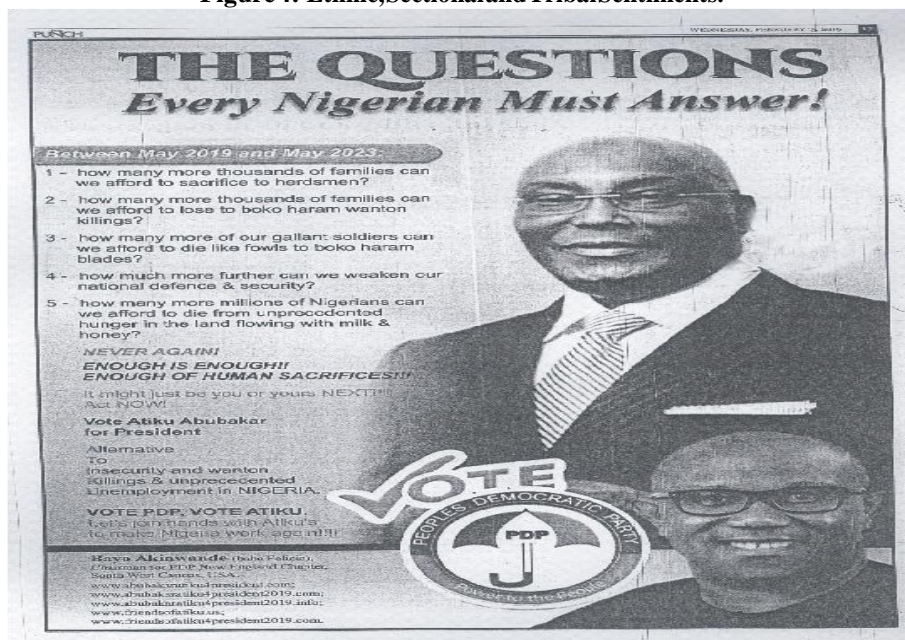
Source: Punch Newspaper, Monday, February 11, 2019, p.30

Textual Unit	Analysis
Wording of Advert	The headline is simple and straight forward, rice sufficiency, ending a regime of rice waivers, but the body copy is verbose.
Theme	Agriculture development —issue based advert
Subject Matter	Issue based — agric industry development and rice sufficiency
Style	Direct explanation and persuasive appeals
Intention / Interpretation	To create mileage for the APC and Buhari's policy on agriculture.
Use of Picture	A cartoon was used to depict President Buhari in Agbada and cap and farmers growing rice on farmlands inside the map of Nigeria.

Source: Textual Analysis, 2019

The above advert published by APC's Buhari — Osinbajo Corporate Support Group painted a picture of past scenario before Buhari administration, that Nigeria badly implemented the rice blueprint as it continued to give ridiculous rice waivers which drained our foreign reserves. The advert further revealed that the volume of rice imported into Nigeria has declined drastically. For example, in 2016 about 58,260 metric tons (MT) of rice was imported into Nigeria, and by November 2017, the figure crashed to 23,192 MT, and between January and November 2018 the figure further reduced to 6,277 MT while 2.5 million jobs were created through the Anchor Borrowers Program. 18 states are presently reputed as reliable rice producers, namely: Kebbi, Benue, Ebonyi, Ekiti, FCT, Jigawa, Kaduna, Kano, Nasarawa, Kastina, Lagos, Sokoto, Kwara, Niger, Ogun, Zamfara, Kogi and Kano. The advertisements further urged voters to return Buhari back to power in order for Nigeria to stay on course on the rice revolution.

**Figure 4: Ethnic, Sectional and Tribal Sentiments.**



Source: Punch, Wednesday, February 13<sup>th</sup>, 2019 p.17

Textual	Analysis
Wording of Advert	The copy words used were simple, fluid and asked five different questions.
Theme	A full page size colour political advertisement that highlighted sectional, regional and national interest issues.

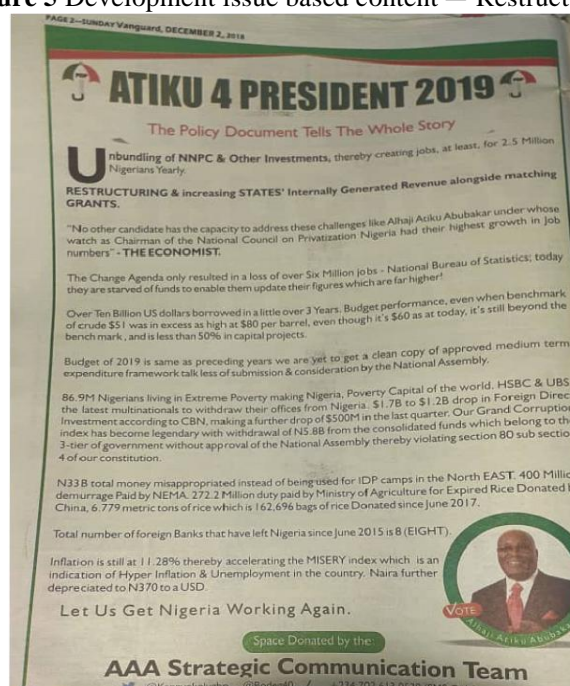
Subject Matter	The advert focused on Boko Haram and Fulani Herdsmen wanton killings in North — East, Nigeria.
Style	The question style approach was adopted by the advertiser, PDP.
Intention/Interpretation	The advert headline read thus —the questions every Nigerian must answer! Five different questions were asked, as follow: (1) How many more thousands of families can we afford to sacrifice to herdsmen? (2) How many more families can we afford to lose to Boko Haram wanton killings? (3) How many more of our gallant soldiers can afford to die like fowls to Boko-Haram blades?
Use of Pictures	Atiku Abubakar's picture in suit with a rim of glass was splashed at the centre of the full page colour advert, and PDP logo, umbrella and motto: Power to the people conspicuously placed beneath the balanced picture. The five questions occupied half of the space and the third party sponsor, Bayo Akinwande, Chairman PDP, New England Chapter, South West Caucus, USA and numerous website contact addresses were displayed.

Source: Textual Analysis, 2019.

The above full page colour advertisement by a third party sponsor highlighted ethnic and tribal sentiment (Fulani-herdsmen) and sectional issue of Boko Haram wanton killings predominantly in North — East, Nigeria. The creative adopted fear appeal and asked the electorates fundamental questions: (a) how many more thousands of families can Nigeria afford to sacrifice to Fulani herdsmen banditry (b) how many more thousands of families can Nigeria afford to continue lose to Boko-Haram wanton killing fields. The advert was published in the wake of another round of Dapchi Girls kidnap and Leah Sharibu abduction by Boko- Haram because of her refusal to renounce her Christian faith. The advertiser, PDP specifically targeted South

-West, South-East and South-South voters, especially the two major tribes, Igbo and Yoruba appealing to their ethnic, sectional and tribal sentiments not to cast their votes for APC's Buhari and the North cabal hijacked presidency. However, the ethnic, sectional and tribal sentiment effect was neutralized by the APC Campaign Organization led by Mr. Rotimi Amaechi, Minister for Transport, from Rivers state (Niger Delta) as the Director-General and Senator Bola Ahmed Tinubu, former Governor of Lagos State who served as General Adviser and Chief Campaigner for APC.

**Figure 5** Development issue based content — Restructuring



Source: Sunday Vanguard December 2, 2018 p.2

Textual Unit	Analysis
Wording of Advert	The headline is simple and punchy “ Atiku 4 president 2019” and the kicker reads: “The Policy Documents Tells the Whole Story”
Theme	A full page colour advertisement that highlighted PDP’s Atiku Abubakar policies on unbundling of NNPC, Restructuring, rising inflation and poverty
Subject Matter	The Advert focused on development issues such as: anti-corruption, curtailing rising inflation and poverty alleviation.
Style	The narrative copy employed implied suggestion approach and gave the readers opportunity to draw conclusions from facts presented.
Intention/ Interpretation	To counter attack APC’s Change Agenda that has resulted in loss of over six million jobs due to bad policy.
Use of Picture	The identified sponsor, AAA Strategic Communication Team placed Atiku Abubakar’s picture in suit at far right corner of the advert and PDP logo on top of the headline.

Source: Textual Analysis, 2019

The above full page colour advertisement published by PDP’s Alhaji Atiku Abubakar (AAA) Strategic Communication Team addressed numerous development issues: unbundling of NNPC and petroleum industry thereby creating at least 2.5 million jobs yearly; restructuring and increasing states internally generated revenue(IGR). The copy adopted counter attacks strategy thus “86.9 millions Nigerians are living in extreme poverty, making Nigeria poverty capital of the world. HSBC and UBS are the latest multinational to withdraw their offices in Nigeria.

On fighting corruption, PDP’s Atiku stated that 33billion Naira is misappropriated instead of catering for IDP (Internally Displaced Persons) camps in the North-East. On the economy, Atiku noted that “total number of banks that left Nigeria since June 2015 is eight. Hyper inflation is at 11.28 percent and there is rising unemployment in the country. Naira has further depreciated to 370Naira to 1 US Dollar. PDP slogan enjoined the electorates to ‘Let Us Get Nigeria Working Again by voting Atiku 4 President 2019.

**Figure 6** Development based issue - Anti corruption



Source - The Guardian, Thursday Feb 14<sup>th</sup>, 2019 p. 46

Textual Unit	Analysis
Wordings of Advert	A command headline was adopted thus: “As you go to the polls on Saturday, remember what they are truly about.”
Theme	Development issue based content advertisement —War against Corruption
Subject Matter	APC’s President Buhari reiterated the fight against corruption- the looters (PDP) must be swept away forever, the advert body copy stated.

Style	The comparative style was adopted
Intention/Interpretation	The advertisement compared the two leading parties, APC and PDP, and further discredited or “de market” the latter as corrupt, full of looters, greedy, selfish and wasteful politicians.
Use of Pictures	PDP logo, the umbrella was placed on the left and APC’s broom on the right and comparison were made.

Source- Textual Analysis, 2019

The full page colour advertisement sponsored by Buhari-Osinbajo Campaign Organization compared APC leadership within three years to have generated over 5000 megawatts of light, while PDP within sixteen years of leadership wasted 16 Billion dollars to generate 3000 megawatts of darkness. Again, APC’s Buhari is portrayed has been resourceful, for building foreign reserves up to 47.6 billion dollars within 3 years, whereas PDP drew down foreign reserve to 23 billion dollars. In addition, APC’s Buhari led Federal Government approved minimum wage of 27,000 Naira and later increased to 30,000 Naira, whereas PDP pegged minimum wage at 18,000 Naira.

PDP was further positioned, framed and branded as greedy, reckless in spending and APC as ingenious, for pulling Nigeria out of recession within 18 months. The APC sponsored advertisement employed emotional appeal and enjoined the electorates to vote wisely, as looters (PDP) must be swept away forever.

## V. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OFFINDINGS

Research Question One: What are the developmental issues contained in the political advertisements published in the selected newspapers on the 2019 presidential election?

Development issues based content advertisements placed by politicians, their campaign organizations and third party sponsors focused on issues and public policies that leads to progress in which political advertisers express their views, suggestions, plans and solutions to tackle problems of under development. Such development based issues includes: poverty alleviation, employment and job creation, anti-corruption fight, infrastructural provisions, privatization, education, electoral reforms, judiciary, justice systems, youth and sports, among others.

The 2019 Presidential election national debate held in Abuja was boycotted by the two leading parties and aspirants, the eventual winner, APC’s President Muhammadu Buhari and PDP’s Alhaji Atiku Abubakar. The electorates were denied of hearing their plans and views on public policies. However, most of the newspapers political advertisements were development issue based in content. Two of such print advertisements were analyzed, in Figures 2 and 3 which centered on Education and Agriculture. Education Reform, a core development issue, in which PDP’s Aiku advertised his vision to transform Nigeria within the first six months by presenting to the National Assembly a National Education Reform Bill. The text of the advert sponsored by Atiku /Obi Campaign Organization across all newspapers read: A National Education Reform Bill to be presented to the National Assembly to facilitate the development of industry led science, technical and construction, agriculture, entertainment, ICT and Allied services”. The full page colour advert urged the electorate to cast their votes for PDP’s Better Life for Nigerians.

Another developmental issue based advertisement is contained in Figure 3 on agriculture and the Rice Blue print by APC’s Buhari — Osinbajo Campaign Organization. The advert revealed that the volume of rice imported to the country has reduced drastically, and 2.5 million jobs were created through the Anchor Borrowers Program while eighteen (18) states are presently sufficient in rice production. The advertisement enjoined voters to return back to power APC’s Buhari in order for Nigeria not to derail on the agric rice revolution.

Research Question 2 — What texts in these advertisements contained ethnic, religious, tribal and sectional sentiments?

The Advertising Practitioners Council of Nigeria (APCON) Code of Advertising Practice and Sales Promotion and other Rights/Restrictions (2012) states that” political advertisements shall not explicitly nor implicitly exploit ethnicity, religion or nay other sectional interest” (p.1747). In addition, Article 74 further noted that “media houses, (advertising) agencies, political parties, politicians and their agents shall ensure that political advertisements are in consonance with the provision of this code as it relates to political activities and or Oath of advertising practice and the Nigeria Broadcasting Corporation Code as it relate to political advertising” (p.1747). Likewise, Section 95 (1) of Nigeria Electoral Act (2010) directed that “all political campaigns or slogans shall not be tainted with abusive language directly or indirectly likely to injure religious, ethnic, tribal or sectional feelings.” Few of the advertisements in the 2019 presidential election reviewed, for example, figure 4 bothers on ethnic, sectional and tribal sentiments. The Atiku — Obi campaign Organization advert headline read thus — the questions every Nigerian must answer: (a) how many more families can we afford to sacrifice to Fulani herdsmen? (b) How

many more families can we afford to lose to Boko Haram wanton killings? The advertisement whip-up sentiments about ethnic and tribal issue of Fulani herdsmen and sectional issues of Boko Haram religious extremists' wanton killings ravaging the North — East, Nigeria. Some of the political advertisements published during 2019 Presidential election campaign did not bear the regulatory APCON's ASP vetting stamp. For political reasons, some of the advertisement published during the 2019 presidential election did not bear the Advertising agencies AAAN members number, in spite of the fact that 65 percent of the artworks were approved by APCON'S ASP, prior to exposure to the public (Daily Independent, 2019).

There are no AAAN registration numbers at their bottom edges to indicate agencies where these advertisements originated. For example, Figure 4 of PDP's Atiku-Obi campaign was a third party sponsored materials.

**Question 3:** How did these political advertisements employed negative/attack strategies in their creative artworks?

Attack or negative political advertisement contain only negative information about the opposition and nothing positive about the opponent (Goldstein & Freedman, (2002); Kaid, (2002); Lau & Sigelman (2000); Okpara, Anuforo & Achor (2016); Opeibi, (2006); Udeze & Akpan (2003). Voters do exhibit different attitudes towards negative/attack political advertisements. Factors such as electorate level of confidence, education, political literacy, contents and structure of the adverts, and personality of the sponsor influence the effect of negative/attack adverts on the electorate (Otun & Smith, 2018 p.14).

From the findings of this study, few advertisements published during the 2019 presidential election employed negative/personal attack strategy. For instance, Figure 1, the APC's advert raised three questions against the integrity of the opponent and arch rival, PDP's Alhaji Atiku Abubakar, the former Vice President. The body of the artwork read thus: "they say ours (referring to President Buhari) is too weak and old to rule us, yet they bring us one who did nothing but worked in the Customs yet has billion of dollars to show for it. "So would you rather vote for our conservative ex-military man or their dynamic and articulate rent taker?" The APC advert portrayed the opponent, PDP candidate, Alhaji Atiku as a dishonest, crook and corrupt politician.

## VI. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The main objective of this study was to interrogate and analyze the 2019 presidential election campaign advertisements published in selected Nigeria newspapers and examine development issue relevant to the voters, as against personal/negative attack, ethnic, tribal, religious and sectional message and their level of compliance to APCON's code of advertising practice. This study employed textual analysis design and analyzed 4 different newspapers editions to determine the ways in which these political advertisements were used to persuade and influence electorate in the 2019 presidential election. The summary of findings of this study are as follows:

- (1) Advertising Practitioners Council of Nigeria (APCON), the regulatory body expressed some satisfaction over 65 percent level of compliance by candidates, their campaign organizations and advertising agencies in ASP's vetting of artworks before exposure to the electorate or voters.
- (2) Newspaper political advertisement budget spent was higher than other platforms — radio and television, online, Magazine and out-of-home in the 2019 presidential election.
- (3) The 2019 presidential election fierce media war was regulated and sanitized, with less negative/personal attack advertisements between the two dominant political parties, APC and PDP.
- (4) This study further revealed that 2019 political advertisements reviewed were not free from ethnic, religious, tribal and sectional sentiments.
- (5) Majority of the advertisements were issue based and reflected the subject, such as: APC's Buhari Agric and Rice Blueprint and PDP's Atiku National Education Reform Bills.
- (6) The political advertisements of the 2019 presidential election did not display AAAN registration numbers at the bottom edges to indicate agencies where they originated.
- (7) For political reason, some of the political advertisements published during the 2019 presidential election did not bear the agencies AAAN numbers, despite the fact that 65 percent of the artworks were approved by APCON's prior to exposure to the electorate.

## VII. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on these conclusions, it is recommended that:

- (1) Advertising industry regulatory body, APCON and media ombudsman, Nigeria Press Council (NPC) should intensify efforts to raise the level of compliance of vetting and approval of political advertisements prior to exposure to the public.
- (2) APCON should embark on aggressive public awareness campaigns to educate the general public,

advertisers, politicians, campaign organization on the procedures and process of vetting both political and commercial advertisements.

(3) APCON should arraign in competent law court advertisers who publishes without ASP certificates of approval and be made to pay the minimum conviction fine of N500,000 to serve as deterrent to erring advertisers and practitioners.

(4) Monitoring and Public Complaints Centers be established in major cities to beef up ASP vetting and approval procedures of political advertisements.

(5) The electoral body, INEC should organize sensitization workshops and seminars for politicians vying for positions, on the value of democracy and rules governing elections.

(6) Newspaper Proprietors (NPAN), Guild of Editors (NGE) and Advert managers should set aside partisan and pecuniary gains and adhere to the code on political advertising by rejecting ASP unapproved advertisements.

(7) Electoral body (INEC) should impose punitive measures on leadership of registered parties and politicians that flout the laws on political advertising.

(8) Civil societies such as Transition Monitoring Group (TMG) should organize workshops for political stakeholders on issue based advertising campaign and shun negative/attack advert so as to advance peace, cohesion, national unity and development.

(9) Electorate or voters should shun advertisers: politicians, campaign organizations and third party sponsors who engage in electoral violence or propagate negative attack advert during campaigns, by denying them of the desperate and desired votes.

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