

CHANGING PERSPECTIVES OF POLITICS MARKETING IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Politics marketing in recent years has attracted increasing attention from politicians all over the world, though not much from academia. Politics is about power and the distribution of scarce resources has created more politics marketing. For a third world economy like, Nigeria the challenges are enormous, and can play a major role on how good leaders can be elected and invariably, how scarce resources of the nation are distributed to achieve voter/consumer satisfaction and overall economic development. The paper looked at politics marketing from the perspective of more developed economies. The model of a market-oriented party thus involves: use of market intelligence; adaptation of behavior; organizational implementation; and conveyance of new behavior, and its implications for Nigeria. The paper also examined evolution and development of party politics in Nigeria. The political structure, with ethnic and religious slant, were handed over by the British Colonial masters, leading to instability, military intervention and an evolving political culture, after over 53 years of independence. The paper recommends an independent electoral body; an incorruptible judiciary; enlightened electorate and deregistering of mushroom political parties.

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KEYWORDS: Politics, Marketing, Electorate, Market-Oriented Party, Democracy

INTRODUCTION

The current interest in politics by marketers may not be unconnected with the recent definition, importance, world view of politics in our daily life, and the misapplication of power politics by those in authority. Heywood (2007) defines politics as the activity through which people make, preserve and amend the general rules under which they live. However, looking at politics as power and the distribution of resources, he argued that at its broadest sense, politics concerns the production, distribution and use of resources in the course of social existence. Politics therefore is, in essence, power. It is the ability to achieve a desired outcome, through whatever means. From this perspective, Lasswell (1936), summed it up by arguing that, politics is about diversity and conflict, but the essential ingredient is the existence of scarcity. The simple fact that, while human needs and desires are infinite, the resources available to satisfy them are always limited. He also viewed the elite as primary holders of power. Politics can therefore be seen as a struggle over scarce resources, and power can be seen as the means through which this struggle is conducted. From the above one can easily understand why oyibosonline.com, quoting the former president of Nigeria, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, described the 2007 general elections in Nigeria as a matter of life and death for the ruling party PDP, and likened it to a military warfare without weapons.

Marketing is increasingly becoming an inseparable aspect of politics since both marketing and politics have the identical ultimate goal of attracting, holding and sustaining customers (voters and consumers) to their specific product or brand. The infiltration of politics by business therefore, has attracted increasing attention of political commentators in recent years. According to Lee–Marshment (2001), research has been conducted into how politics marketing has permeated political communications with political parties making increasing use of professional advertising from the world of business as well as polling agencies to inform their campaign design. They equally use political marketing to inform all aspects of party behavior and not just campaigning. Political parties also use marketing instruments as part of their electoral campaign activities (Kotler and Kotler, 1999; Scammell, 1999). The literature on politics marketing has contributed considerable insight into how specific marketing instruments have been utilized to optimize tactical and strategic aspects of political campaigns (Newman, 1994; Kavanagh, 1995; Scammell, 1995; Wring, 1999; Wring, 2002b). Besides parties and individual candidates, the employment of political marketing instruments can be noted for grass–roots organizations within a party (Franklin and Richardson (2002), single–issues groups (Lindsay, 1999), or governments and executive bodies (Newman, 1995; Nimmo, 1999; Burma, 2001; Newman, 2001; Harris, 2001a).

The rest of this paper reviews the related literature on politics marketing, first from the conceptual context and perspective of the developed economies of Europe and United States of America (USA). We focus specifically on how a party can achieve electoral victory, through the use of marketing techniques to become truly a market-oriented party. Next, the paper presents a model of market-oriented party, which suggests the process and socio-behavioral adaptations necessary for the enthronement of a market-oriented party. Furthermore, the evolution of party politics in Nigeria is reviewed and the political market opportunities, in the country are analyzed. Lastly, the implications of the study, as well as the conclusions and recommendations of the study are discussed.

LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Lees–Marshment (2001), marketing, is a form of management or approach used primarily by business organizations. It has evolved to include the design and promotion of a product to ensure that the goals of the organization, primarily making a profit in the case of a business, are met. However, marketing is not just about selling, or, in political terms, campaigning. Citing Levitt, (1960), Les-Marshment, observed the difference between marketing and selling is more than semantics. Selling focuses on the needs of the seller, while marketing is focused on the needs of the buyer. Selling is preoccupied with the seller’s need to convert his product into cash. Marketing is concerned with satisfying the needs of the customer by means of the product and the cluster of things associated with creating, delivering, and consuming the product. The current marketing philosophy focuses on how firms can satisfy customers and adopt a market orientation, as this is deemed the most effective way to meet the firm’s goals and also applies to politics marketing and political parties.

Lees-Marshment further explored the potential of political marketing on a theoretical level, integrating both management and political science literature to create a model of how a political party can use marketing and become market oriented. She also examined the extent to which Thatcher and the Conservatives in 1979 exhibited behavior in line with this model and compared this with Blair and Labour in 1997. It showed how Thatcher used marketing to inform policy design, a model which Blair followed but to a great extent, using results from market intelligence to push for changes in the role of party membership and further centralization of power to ensure a clear organizational structure within the party.

Nkamnebe (2003), reviewing Gamble (1990) noted, particularly in a developing country context like Nigeria, marketers are often occupied with increasing demand for basic needs to an extent they forget to think about the synergistic potentiality of studying marketing as a veritable tool for productive political

process. Most importantly perhaps is the general weak political behavior occasioned by frequent truncated democracy, which is characterized by military dictatorship and pseudo military democracies. He further discussed similarities of marketing and politics on the basis of the obvious interface between the two, mentioning attempts made to conceptualize their semblance. He then identified and discussed some obvious similarities between marketing and politics under the following themes: market problems; product development; purchasing; distribution and market communications. The differences include market, structure market periodicity and organizational objective. He also identified some factors that influence the development of politics marketing in third world countries like Nigeria to include: illiteracy; poverty; corrupt bureaucracy; and sit-tight syndrome.

Citing (Beard, 2000; Chang and Park, 1998), Opeibi (2006) argued that political advertising in the past two decades in Nigeria has assumed a new dimension with an increasing use of negative political advertising during electioneering campaigns. Continuing, he noted that prior to this period in Nigeria, political candidates concentrated more on selling themselves and their programmes to the people with very few instances of negative advertisements. However, with the resuscitation of democratic activities in 1998, leading to elections in 1999, the competitive nature of electioneering campaigns and the 'winners-take-all-syndrome' that characterized that election and especially the 2003 elections changed. Many political candidates abandoned positive, issue-focused, image-building advertisements for direct attacks on their opponents. Concluding, he said that based on data taken from selected Nigerian newspapers, factors such as: level of education of voters; political literacy; content and structure of advertisements; personality of the sponsor (and/or the political candidate) among others may influence the effect of negative campaign on the electorate. Hennerberg (2003), used two perspectives of instrumental and functional views to analyze political marketing management. The analyses used existing instrumental (means-oriented) interpretations of political marketing activities and drive, as an alternative to 'managerial' orientation, an ends oriented categorization of generic functions that provide a new way of describing and characterizing political marketing management. The analysis also used Henneberg's (2004) political marketing theory: hendiadyoin or oxymoron.

Other researches who attempted to apply the theoretical basis of marketing for business to politics include (Niffenegger, 1989; Newman, 1994; O'Shaughnessy, 1990; Wring, 1995), among others, even though they focused more on marketing functions of communications and selling. According to Kotler, Armstrong, Saunders, and Wong (1999), the selling concept is practiced in the non-profit area. A political party vigorously sells its candidate to voters as a fantastic person for the job. The candidate works hard at selling himself or herself by shaking hands, kissing babies, meeting donors and making speeches in addition to the use of public media like radio and television advertising, billboards, posters and mailing. Bovee and Thill (1992) may have been thinking in that direction when they posit that, a political party markets its candidates and its ideas. It produces candidates with distinct political points of view, and it promotes them through a variety of advertising techniques. The target market is registered voters, and the marketing goal is to sell voters on the politician and the kind of re-presentation he or she would provide. The price is a vote.

Lees-Marshment (2001) toes this line of marketing concept in politics marketing by arguing that if a political party implemented the marketing philosophy, it will seek to meet voters' needs and wants, thus producing voter satisfaction, and in doing so, satisfies its own goals. A market-oriented party is not concerned with changing peoples' mind, but rather, in following them. They invest heavily in advertising, to convince voters their party is the best one, or engage in arguing their particular ideology. A party would act in line with the rational-choice notion put forward by Downs (1957) that, parties need to move to a median position to win enough electoral support to get into office. The organizational focus of the party is on voter needs and wants, and on the best way to satisfy those needs and wants. A major party in Britain for instance would design its product or determine its behavior in a way that will attract support from those it needs, enough of the electorates to win office in a general election.

MODEL OF A MARKET-ORIENTED PARTY

Lee – Marshment identified four main activities that a party attempting to use marketing in determining all aspect of its behavior would engage in. These include: use of market intelligence; adapting its behavior to suit those whose support it seeks; implementing this new behavior at all levels of the party organization; and conveying this to the electorate.

(i) Use of Market Intelligence: A party will invest significant efforts in discovering the needs, wants, behavior and the demands of the voters whose support it seeks. It is concerned with party-voter communication in its broadest sense, and can be derived from many sources and in different ways. All or any of these research methods formal/informal, quantitative/qualitative, primary/secondary may be employed by parties. The party leadership might create committees or task-forces to examine the party's problems, and look into what marketing could offer. This includes both hiring professionals with marketing expertise or outright Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) Consultants. Today's, marketing is leaning towards seamless communication (viz, polling and advertising agencies, direct mail consultants, market analysis/statistical experts). These could either be outsourced, completed from within the party or a mixture of both. This will help ensure acceptance and thus the success of marketing as party members can also be made aware of the results of research by professionals. In seeing results of opinion polls, party members will accept that, despite the perceived value of the party's current policies, voters will not support them, if such policies do not match voter satisfaction, needs and wants.

(ii) Adaptation of Behavior: The party would then adapt its behavior, or design its 'product', according to the findings from its market intelligence. A party's product would include more than just the slogans and posters it produces in a campaign. It should also include all aspects of its behavior at all times (not just at election time), and at every level of the party (not simply the leadership).

A party is a more complicated entity than a business and thus needs not to simply follow voters but adjust this new product design to take into account various factors. First it considers whether the product design is achievable. A market-oriented-party would not "promise-heaven on earth", but as much as possible; ensure that it can 'deliver' its promised product especially where policy proposals are concerned. Compare this with the ruling party Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) in Nigeria that promised zero power outages after six months. It won an election in 1999. Eight years thereafter power outages had gotten worse, but the party still contested and won elections in 2007 and 2011, and is preparing to contest in 2015. Interestingly, what is akin to a party adapting its behavior or designing its product according to the findings from its market intelligence is evident. The PDP, Nigerian ruling invested significant effort and financial resources in electric power generation and distribution, to achieve zero power outage in 2014, before the 2015 general election. Power supply is critical to winning electoral votes in 2015. Secondly, a party should estimate what likely reaction of internal support will be to the proposed changes in behavior.

A political party will normally engage in competition and support analysis. It will take into account the strengths and weakness of opposition parties and should alter its design to ensure that it has strength where the other party/parties are weak. The party may also adopt target marketing, if it already has long-term, loyal support from one section of society, it may then reduce the aspect of the product design that suits its demand and alter its behavior to suit another section of the society. This other section makes different demands but whose support the party does not yet have but needs to win power. It does so as long as it can make these changes without alienating its existing support base. This is true for any party wanting to win electoral votes in the South-South/Niger-Delta region of Nigeria in all elections. One of Nigeria's political parties, the Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN), which has now merged with other opposition parties, to form the All Progressive Congress (APC), probably had this in mind due to the strategic nature of the South-South or Niger-Delta, where the party does not seem to have electoral strength. The alternate party promised to set up a ministry of the Niger-Delta to more effectively tackle

problems of this region that produces more than eighty percent (80%) of the nation's resources in terms of crude oil reserves.

(iii) Organizational Implementation: The party then ensures the new product design is implemented at all levels of the party. This is essential to be effective and attract support from voters, but requires careful organizational handling. The greater the degree of change in behavior required, the harder the task for the party leadership to attract support for such change. Thus the party leadership will be aware of potential problems and either take measures to avoid it or be ready to respond to such problems, while planning to carry the electorate or voters along in the implementation. Failure of organizational implementation is evident in the zero tolerance for corruption or anti graft policy and due process of the ruling party in Nigeria the PDP. It is rather embarrassing that a top party hierarchy, in fact the fourth in government could not adapt to such strategic and important party policy as was the situation some time ago, in the lower National Legislative House. How then can the party intend to carry the electorate along in future behavior adaptation. However, the emergence of APC has changed the political landscape and the need for all parties, especially the ruling party, to adapt a market-oriented party policy as the 2015 election approaches.

(iv) Conveyance of New Behavior: A party should naturally communicate its new behavior or new product design in a positive way to voters. Kotler and Andreasen (1987), argued that everything about an organization—its products, employees, facilities and actions communicate something. Not only could the nature of the leaders, but the behavior and rights of party members are influential in attracting or propelling voters. Shaw (1994), contended that the British labor party failed to win the 1992 general election because (among other factors), despite policy changes, Kinnock (party leader) lacked the time and support to transform the party itself... its ethos, its language and rituals, and its close association with the unions, all alienated the electorate. So a party using marketing would attempt to display behavior in line with the new product design at all levels and at all times.

Generally speaking, if a party engages in these four activities, the model contends that the party will win power, and would also deliver the product to voters. Thus carrying out its promise through into government. This is arguably the most important and difficult part of marketing, though still a subject of much debate due to varying levels of success. From a pragmatic point of view, there are arguments as to whether the use of marketing in this way can help increase party standings. Thatcher's Conservative Party successfully used the four models to win election in Britain in 1979. However by 1997, Blair's Labour Party, through the use of a more effective combination of the four models, took over the government from conservatives. The Democratic Party in the USA, also effectively used the model to win the last two presidential elections.

EVOLUTION OF PARTY POLITICS IN NIGERIA

Serious party politics started in Nigeria in the 1950s in anticipation of independence from Britain in 1960. Then politics revolved around major tribal leaders. Though there were other parties, the three major tribes Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba, formed the three major parties. The Northern Peoples Congress (NPC) with Alhaji Ahmadu Bello as leader was the major party in the north. The National Congress of Nigeria Citizens (NCNC) with Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe as leader was the dominant party in the east. After some realignments Action Group (AG) with Chief Obafemi Awolowo as leader was the major party in the west.

As the nationalists' struggle for political power gathered momentum in the 1950s, Omoweh and Boom (2005), noted it was obvious that sooner rather than later, Nigeria would become politically independent. Consequent upon this, the colonialist handed over the reign of government to a class of politicians believed to be capable of protecting its economic interest in the post-colonial period. It was a political class not groomed for political administration of the country, explaining its preference to continue with

colonial policies, politics and structures of exploitation instead of changing them. Once in power, the dominant political class exhibited features of the colonial state, relying on violence, repression and coercion to manage. They thereby attached too much importance to political power, since their security and survival depended largely on it. Political competition then became deadly, and those who had political power defended it at all cost and by all means. Those seeking to replace current holders of political power deployed all means within their reach. That was the foundation on which Nigerian politics was built and eventually saw it through a series of military intrusions, civil war and few years of civilian administration since independence in 1960.

ANALYSING POLITICAL MARKET OPPORTUNITY

Having evolved through stages of colonial, military and civilian administrations, the current dispensation is the longest democratic administration the country had experienced since the 1960 independence. This political period tagged the 4th Republic came into being in 1999 following a keenly contested presidential election between the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and the merged party, Alliance for Democracy (AD) and All Peoples Party (APP). Since then, three successive elections have been held and political observers have opined that each successive election was an improvement on the previous one. The 2011 election was especially improved with international observers acknowledging it to be credible. The PDP emerged the winning party in the 1999 election, and has remained the leading party since. They control in all instances, more than 50 percent of vital political positions in the nation. Table 1 below presents a picture of the results of presidential elections since 1999.

Table 1: Analysis of Voting Results and Voters Participation during Various Presidential Elections in Nigeria (1999 – 2011)

	1999	2003	2007	2011
Number of registered Political Parties	3	28	63	63
Percentage of votes won by:				
Leading Political Party	62.78 (PDP)	61.94 (PDP)	69.82 (PDP)	58.89 (PDP)
2 nd Leading Political Party	37.22 (AD/APP)	32.19 (ANPP)	18.72 (ANPP)	31.98 (CPC)
3 rd Leading Political Party	-	3.29 (APGA)	7.49 (AC)	5.41 (ACN)
Total Percentage of votes controlled by the three (3) leading parties	100	97.42	96.03	96.28
Turn out rates of voters	52.3	N.A	57.5	53.7

Source: Authors' compilation from various public sources. This table shows the number of approved political parties in the various electioneering years from 1999 to 2011. It further shows the distribution of the share of votes cast, among the three (3), leading political parties in the country. Lastly, it shows the percentage of registered voters that actually cast their votes at the various elections.

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Although the PDP has remained the leading party through this period but its market share, from the percentage of electoral votes has not been stable. It declined by more than 10 percent in the 2011 election which was adjudged the fairest of all elections thus far. More interesting is the performance of the challenging parties. ANPP which had 32.19% in 2003 declined to 18.72% in 2007. It is clear that while PDP is likely to retain its leadership position in 2015, but its share of the market is likely to reduce to the advantage of other contending parties.

More than 60 political parties are registered in Nigeria but not all participate in National elections. For instance, in 2011, only 56 out of the 63 registered political parties participated in the general election, and

only 20 parties contested in the presidential election (INEC, 2011). Table 1 shows also the number of participating political parties notwithstanding. Three parties control more than 95% of the votes cast in all the presidential elections. In fact, only six of the parties are represented in the National Assembly as well as occupy governorship position in the States as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Percentage of Political Party Control of Seats in National Assembly and State Governorship Positions in 2011

Political Party	Senate	House of Representative	Governorship position
PDP	66	59	64
ACN	17	19	17
ANPP	6	9	8
CPC	6	8	3
LP	4	2	3
APGA	1	-	5
Others	-	3	-

Source: INEC records This table shows the percentage seats occupied in the Senate, House of Representatives and Governorship positions by political parties. The table shows that only two parties on the average control about 80% of the seats or positions in the nation during the 2011 elections.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

It is evident from the above presentation that the political environment is growing in maturity and competitiveness. This is a clear sign that the nation is likely to experience yet another keenly contested 2015 general election, especially with the merger of ACN, ANPP, CPC and a faction of APGA, to form the APC, (see appendix 1). As in other strong competitive situations, only the fittest survive. In a marketing environment, companies that adopt a marketing orientation usually survive and perform better than others. Consequently, for any party to survive and remain active in Nigeria, the party must understand in content and context the principles guiding Market-Oriented-Party (MOP); and deliberately adopt and operate it as its organizational culture. As in a conventional market, where the consumer through his power of choice determines which manufacturer remains in the market, the political market has the power to reshape or prune out undeserving political parties, leaving only those that can dance to the tune of the marketplace. Presently, some parties are merging with others, while some are being reorganized for better results. Others who cannot attune themselves to cope with realities of the time have no choice but to face natural extinction.

Doghudje (1992:19) studied factors likely to influence voting decisions of voters in their choice of candidates during 1993 general election and reported that 70% would be influenced by tribe and religion and only 5% by party manifesto. Current development in the environment shows that people are gradually rejecting ethnicity and religious influences and are giving more rational consideration to the candidates' attributes and party programmes. This means that a political campaign that emphasizes tribe and religion may not get much attention. The implication is that parties need to carefully package their brands for effective delivery to the market (the electorate). This will require parties to develop a market oriented manifesto and a candidate who can display a high degree of commitment to the party's manifesto. By doing so, parties would be developing their own brands rather than just accepting and supporting any person who thinks he has what it takes to contest an election.

The environment of marketing is ever changing but astute marketers continually adapt to and exploit opportunities presented by the contemporary environment as they skillfully develop their marketing program based on strengths and weaknesses of the organization in the context of opportunities and threats of the environment. In the same vein, political marketers should have a strategic team that analyzes the market with a view to discovering opportunities and strategies for winning them. For instance, Table 1 shows that turn out rates of voters during previous elections were less than 60%; leaving more than 40%

of an untapped market each time. A creative and innovative party can target that opportunity and convert at least a portion of it to become its customers. Also there is high rate of brand switching in the politics market both among the political candidates and the electorate. Creative exploitation of these opportunities can significantly improve the returns (number of votes gained) of the political party.

The use of political advertising is high in Nigeria given the level of various types of advertising displayed during political campaigns. Studies have shown that quality of message content is important and critical to the effectiveness of the message. This means that political advertising messages, rather than based on attacks on political opponents; should be based on trustworthy, relevant and realistic information correctly packaged and delivered to the target audience. This will likely generate acceptance and build better customer loyalty for the party than messages filled with empty promises and irrelevant bickering.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

The Nigerian Political Market is due for change. Change, they say, is constant but it behooves the players in the market to follow this change in order to remain relevant. The challenge is that parties and political institutions who do not appreciate this changing political scene, and think that it is ‘business as usual,’ will have so much to lose. The country is witnessing structural changes in legal/regulatory frameworks as well as the infrastructure to put the next general election on a good pedestal. For example, the electoral commission (INEC) and electoral system, as well as the judicial systems, are being strengthened. This obviously is an opportunity for market oriented parties that would focus on the needs of the market rather than on the selfish ends of individuals. Parties should therefore set up machinery to analyze, develop and implement strategies in accordance with the current market perspective. This will help them compete strongly in the next election.

Professional institutions like the National Institute of Marketing of Nigeria (NIMN) as an umbrella Marketing Body in Nigeria has a pioneering and vital role to play in all this. The CNN, the Internet and other Interactive Media have changed the world of Politics Marketing in the USA and the other advanced economies of Europe. The last American election was virtually won during the live debate by the CNN. The live broadcast by, Nigeria’s, African Independent Television (AIT), greatly influenced the shaping of Politics Marketing in Nigeria, especially during the National Assembly’s Constitutional debate and tenure elongation of the former government of President Obasanjo. NIMN leadership, should partner with AIT and other virile media to put this issue on the front burner. NIMN should present a position paper/conference on: ‘Politics Marketing and Election Process’. Anybody who wants to be President, Governor, etc, must face Nigerians and tell them where he is coming from. The resources of this country are so enormous, and since politics is about power and distribution of resources, it cannot be left in the hands of just anybody.

Mergers and acquisitions are common practices in the business environment and can be adopted in politics. The current trend towards mergers or some kind of fusion of political parties to present a common formidable offer to the target market is generally welcome, provided the terms of such partnership is clearly spelled out and respected. Such re-engineered party, and in fact any party that desires to survive, should build itself into a strong and vibrant party, rather than using all sorts of tactics, at times unethical, just to win in the 2015 general election. A more sustainable approach is the concept of market-oriented party which will build a party of tomorrow.

This study reviewed the political conditions in the country overtime, based on the trend and records, and also, analyzed opportunities in the politics market, it however, did not emphasize the procedures for developing good political product, nor predict the impact of the switching behavior on market share. Also, the analysis and opinion is base on secondary sources. A survey on the other hand would have disclosed voters’ intention or expectations that can help in molding a virile market-oriented political party. This is

an area for future research, given the strength of the new opposition ahead of the 2015 Nigeria general election.

APPENDIX

Appendix 1: Full Names of Major Political Parties, in Nigeria

1	AD	Alliance for Democracy
2	CAN	Action Congress of Nigeria. (Formerly AD)
3	ANPP	All Nigerian Peoples Party. (Formerly APP)
4	APGA	All Progressive Grand Alliance
5	APP	All Peoples Party
6	CPC	Congress for Progressive Change
7	LP	Labor Party
8	PDP	Peoples Democratic Party.
9	APC	All Progressive Congress. (A new party registered in 2013, which is a merger of ACN, ANPP, CPC, and a faction of, APGA).

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