

POLITICAL DIGITAL ADVERTISING: IMPLICATIONS AND WAY FORWARD FOR NIGERIA'S 2023 GENERAL ELECTIONS

Egbulefu, Chamberlain Chinsom¹

Emeke Precious Nwaoboli²

¹ Benson Idahosa University, Nigeria

² University of Benin, Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria

*Corresponding Email: emekenwaoboli@gmail.com

Citation: Egbulefu, C.C. & Emeke, P.N. (2023). Political Digital Advertising: Implications and Way forward for Nigeria's 2023 General Elections. *KIU Interdisciplinary Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 4(1), 331-349

ABSTRACT

This study looked at the Digital Political Advertising: Implications and Way forward for Nigeria's 2023 General Elections. The objectives of the study were to examine the extent of digital media advertising in the 2023 general election; find out the effectiveness of digital media political advertising on Benin City residents' choice of 2023 presidential candidates in Nigeria; find out the factors (if any), which hinder the effective use of the digital media advertising for the 2023 presidential election and x-ray the ways forward to the impediments of digital advertising usage in the 2023 Nigerian presidential election. The theoretical framework was Cultivation theory and survey served as research instrument. The study found that digital advertising has come to stay and that amidst it is being extensively used by political stakeholders in projecting the agenda and ideologies of the political contenders in the 2023 general elections in Nigeria. As such, political digital advertising cannot be jettisoned by any political party or stakeholders who wish to effectively sell their ideologies irrespective of the presence of traditional and media advertising. It was recommended that political parties and stakeholders who are yet to adopt digital advertising should do so as it has various higher imperatives over traditional political advertising. It was also recommended that political parties and stakeholders who are using digital advertising as their only advertising method should complement their efforts using traditional media in order to get a higher reach especially from political stakeholders who do not have digital advertising reception gadgets.

Keywords: Digital advertising, Political advertising, new media, Nigeria, election.

INTRODUCTION

Political digital advertising is a kind of electioneering that gives politicians the chance to communicate with voters directly and influence the political dialogue through digital technologies and platforms. Politicians may increase their brand awareness, bring important issues to light, and highlight the weaknesses of their opponents by disseminating advertisements across a range of digital media to audiences who would not otherwise be interested in the election because building an image for a brand does not happen overnight (Egbulefu, Nwokoro & Onyenekwe, 2020).

Political advertising has seeped into the political cultures of many democracies and Nigeria, a democratic nation, is not immune from it. This may not be unconnected with Chiakaan, Egbulefu, Kpera & Kaigama (2021) assertion that development is much sought after by nations, especially developing nations like Nigeria. However, this cannot be attained when the democratic process of leadership selection is faulty. Political advertising is one of the specialized areas of business and human communication. In more specific terms, it is a characteristic of social marketing, a division of social advertising. Social advertising includes advertising for political causes, social causes and non-profit organisations. However, political advertising serves a marketing function and has the same purposes and objectives as commercial marketing (Nwosu, 1992). According to Gana (1992) cited in Asemah & Edegoh (2012), canvassing for votes during political elections is sometimes necessary and is a kind of political salesmanship. Today, political parties and politicians use a range of media, including digital media, to reach their audiences.

Radio, television, newspapers, and direct mail were previously employed as the medium for political advertising. Barack Obama was one of the first politicians to use digital media advertising in his campaign in 2008. Nott (2020) states that candidates spent a total of \$22.25 million in 2008 on online political advertisements and politicians spent \$1.4 billion on political internet advertisements in 2016 as a result of the subsequent meteoric rise in their use.

After the 2016 presidential election, the public saw how effective and game-changing political advertising on digital media was. According to Trump campaign digital strategist Brad Parscale, their Facebook effort was "100x to 200x" more successful than the Clinton campaign. The reason for this became abundantly clear when whistleblower Christopher Wylie disclosed that the Trump campaign's data analytics team, Cambridge Analytica, "used personal information taken without authorization in early 2014 to build a system that could profile individual U.S. voters, in order to target them with personalized political advertisements" (Nott, 2020).

The political advertising environment in Nigeria involves expensive national media tours and press conferences across traditional media outlets with the largest audience; millions of naira paid to printing companies for flyers, banners, and other traditional publicity materials; and a tone of TV, radio and newspaper advertisements in aureate language (Nott, 2020).

Like many other democracies, political campaigning in Nigeria still mostly relies on traditional media with most political adverts still predominating on TV, radio, and newspapers (Ojekwe, 2016). Political campaigning has altered as well, with politicians paying more attention to social media and other digital technology platforms, as the internet revolution sweeps the world and dramatically transforms how people work, communicate, conduct business, and make decisions—including in politics. Politicians are increasingly combining the new world of digital technologies with the traditional world of broadcast and print media in their political campaigns (Paatelainen, Kannasto & Isotalus, 2022). Even if it is hard to estimate the amount of digital political advertisements by country (with the exception of a few areas like the US), political advertising is becoming more digital, data-driven, and targeted internationally (Statista, 2022).

Before now radio, television, newspapers and direct mail were the media of political advertising until people started harnessing digital media. Barack Obama was one of the first politicians to use digital media advertising in his campaign in 2008. Nott (2020) states that political candidates spent a total of \$22.25 million on online political advertisements in 2008 and as a result of the success recorded, \$1.4 billion was spent on political internet advertisements in 2016. Also, British politicians are not exempted from this trend; they often utilise Facebook, and during the 2017 UK general elections, digital adverts accounted for at least 43% of all advertising expenditures (Sabbagh 2018). The beginning of a surge in online political campaigns, notably on Twitter and Facebook, was evident during the 2015 Nigerian elections and there are already indications that the amount of political digital advertising will rise for the general elections in 2023.

The digital media have emerged as genuine instruments for political campaigns due to their ability to cross borders and break down barriers, which enables them to communicate with people in every region of the globe. The digital media will inevitably have an effect on the social, political, and economic ideas of individuals, and these consequences will occur. Digital advertising is becoming a norm in political advertising and its effectiveness has not been effectively studied yet in the Nigerian political sphere. As such, this study examines the implications and way forward of political digital advertising for Nigeria's 2023 general elections.

Statement of the Problem

The emergence of digital media has made it possible to have on-demand access to political messages at any time, from any place, and on any digital device. It has also made the possibilities of interactive user input, creative engagement, and the building of communities centered on media content more accessible than ever before. It is not the conversion of physical matter into digital bits that distinguishes digital media from traditional media; rather, what defines digital media from traditional media is the dynamic life of digital media content and its interactive interaction with media consumers.

The use of digital media advertising in promoting political candidates in Nigeria by political strategists and stakeholders is becoming more prevalent than they once were. Political stakeholders have multiplied and upped the bar in terms of the level of professionalism they display especially in digital political advertising. Political digital advertising have also changed in recent times to involve more usage of digital technologies. Nevertheless, although several researchers such as Asemah & Edegoh (2012) have written on political advertising, studies on implications and way forward to political digital advertising for Nigeria's 2023 general elections are very scarce. It is against this backdrop that we investigate the implications and way forward to political digital advertising in Nigeria's 2023 general elections.

Objectives of the study

The objectives of the study are to:

1. Examine the extent of digital media advertising in the 2023 general election
2. Find out the effectiveness of digital media political advertising on Benin City residents' choice of 2023 presidential candidates in Nigeria;
3. Find out the factors (if any), that hinder the effective use of the digital media advertising for the 2023 presidential election
4. X-ray the way forward to the impediments of digital advertising usage in the 2023 Nigerian presidential election

LITERATURE REVIEW

Concept of Advertising

One definition of advertising is that it is any conveyance of information about products, services, or ideas done in an impersonal way through any of the many media. The

essence of advertising is often one of persuasion, and it is funded by sponsors who may be easily identified. To put it another way, advertising is any information that is disseminated in any manner, in any form, or by any means, addressed to an unknown number of people, and intended to attract attention to the subject of advertising, the establishment or maintenance of interest in it, and its promotion on the market. According to Moriarity, Mitchel, and Well (2009, p. 55), advertising is "a paid form of persuasive communication that uses mass and interactive media to reach broad [mass] audiences in order to connect an identified sponsor with buyers [target audience] and provide information about products [goods, services, and ideas". According to the American Marketing Association (AMA), advertising is defined as "any paid form of non-personal presentation and promotion of ideas, goods or services by an identified sponsor." Arens, Weigold, and Arens (2008) further defined advertising as an organized and constructed non-personal delivery of information about items (goods), services, and ideas by an identifiable sponsor(s) via the mass media. In spite of the fact that there are a great number of distinct definitions of advertising, it is essential to emphasize that the conventional definition of advertising comprises of the six major components that are as follows:

1. A method of communication that calls for monetary compensation.
2. The presence of a sponsor who is easily recognizable.
3. The dissemination of information via a variety of different types of media
4. The presence of a specific group of patients who are intended to benefit from the treatment.
5. The inability to tailor the information that is being supplied to the individual's specific needs.
6. A path of behaviour that is intended.

Because of this, it is possible to draw the conclusion that advertising is typically a form of communication that is not personalized, is funded by a recognised sponsor, carried out in a particular manner through the media and other legal means, and that is intended to familiarize consumers with some products and encourage the purchase of those products by a potentially large audience of customers. There are a great number of advantages to advertising, some of which are as follows: It has the ability to reach customers who live in different locations; it has the ability to remind customers that the product does not violate social norms or the law; it has the ability to allow multiple announcements to be made; it has the ability to allow consumers to compare the

product in question to offerings from other businesses; it has the ability to increase a company's popularity and success; and it has the ability to compare the product in question to offerings from other competitive businesses.

Text, music, and colour are just few of the ways that advertising can be very expressive. This allows advertisers to transmit their commodities in a manner that is not only intelligible but also convincing by employing advertising. Advertising helps to shape a picture of the product that is meant to last for a long period of time and remains consistent through time. It also raises the possibility of achieving financial success via sales (Kotler& Armstrong, 2010).

Digital Advertising Defined.

One might arrive at a variety of distinct conclusions on what is meant by the phrase "digital advertising." On the other hand, the fact that it makes use of digital media, especially new media like the internet, is an integral aspect of the description of what it is. This is a particularly significant facet of the term to take into consideration. Additionally, the phrase "digital advertising" refers to advertising that makes use of computer networks, which may be expressed in binary forms such as 0s and 1s. This kind of advertising is often referred to as "online advertising." When we speak about binary, we are talking about a system that represents numbers using just two symbols. This system is called a binary representation. The number "0" is used to indicate an electrical state that is not charged in the language of physics, whereas the number "1" is used to indicate an electrical state that is charged.

Digital advertising can also refer to any and all forms of communication that are produced by an advertiser in order to market and promote its brand, product, or service via the use of various online channels and platforms. In this sense, the term "digital advertising" encompasses the full scope of marketing and promotion activities that take place in the digital realm. As a consequence, it is comprised of actions that take place in web browsers, social networking sites, blog sites, application software, and any other kind of communication that takes place over the internet (Nwaizugbo, 2004).

Digital advertising may often be accessed via a variety of entry points, including search engines, display remarketing, social media, email, and the internet in general. Every byte of digital data that is sent over networks is encoded as a sequence of on/off electrical charges, which a receiving device has to decode and then recompile in order to use the data. On the other hand, it is more fruitful to think about digital media in terms of connectedness, feedback, and interaction as well as higher volumes of information, both in terms of that which is accessible to us and that which we produce about ourselves.

This is because these concepts are more closely related to how we actually use digital media.

Advertisers use the word "digital advertising" to refer to a range of various forms of media and methods, and they bundle them together under one umbrella term. The web, mobile devices, tablets, social networks, location-based services, wearable technology, and other networked devices are examples of these sorts of media and tactics. All of these forms of media and strategies have the potential to contribute to advertising experiences in some way. As such, digital advertising basically involves an increase in the quantity of information that is used to target advertising at people; a greater interconnection between devices that display advertising and also collect information about behaviour through digital technologies.

Political Advertising

Political advertising, according to Olujide, Adeyemi, and Gbadeyan (2010), is the practice of political candidates improving their public awareness via the use of different media. Direct campaign appearances, which were a frequent tactic used by politicians throughout the preceding 50 years, have mostly been superseded by extensive use of television and radio. The most popular tactic is the spot commercial, which aims to show the candidate favourably while painting the opponent in a negative light. It explains the candidate's position on selected issues and links the candidate with targeted community groups (Asemah and Edegoh, 2012).

Political advertising, like other types of commercial communication, aims to encourage the public to support a certain politician or political party. Political parties now package their candidates and sell them to the public in an effort to win their support. Therefore, contemporary politics would be lacking something fundamental without political advertising. Asemah and Edgoh(2012) defined political advertising as all forms of advertising that are relevant to generating support for political campaigns, such as those of candidates seeking for office, ballot initiatives, political action, and so on.

Asemah and Edgoh(2012) stated that since the World Wide Web (WWW) was created, no political campaign can be deemed successful if the candidate does not use the power of social media, political email advertising, and search engine marketing. The Internet is a widely utilised electronic medium that makes it possible to disseminate information in a way that is both economical and highly effective. A well-crafted political message that is posted to social media sites, for instance, has the potential to become viral in a matter of minutes. This may draw thousands, tens of thousands, or even more individuals to your website, where they will finally see your message.

Perspectives on the 2023 General Elections

The 2023 elections are expected to include participation from 18 political parties, with the opposition Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and the governing All Progressives Congress (APC) vying for every open seat. Along with the presidential primary, the remaining parties will face off for control of local and national government. Among the major contenders of the election are the Labour Party (LP) and New Nigeria Peoples Party (NNPP). There may be a three-horse race for the election between the APC, Labour Party and PDP. In Nigeria, nothing like that has ever occurred as it has always been between PDP and APC.

There are 4,259 candidates contending for the 469 seats in the National Assembly, in addition to the 36 candidates running for president and their vice presidential candidates (comprising the Senate and House of Representatives). In the state elections, 10,231 persons are vying for 993 assembly seats, while 837 people are vying for 28 governorships. Three thousand eighty-five (385) male candidates are vying for office, including 35 for the presidency and vice presidency, 1,008 for the senate, and 2,832 for the house of representatives (The Guardian, 2022).

Similar to this, 381 women are seeking elective offices, including 92 senators, 288 representatives in the House of Representatives, and 1 for president (The Guardian, 2022). The next presidential election in Nigeria will be the first time a former military leader will not be on the ballot in the country's current democratic period. Muhammadu Buhari, who has been the nation's president since 2015, has said that he would not run for office again. Another first is that the governing party is running two Muslims, Kashim Shettima and Bola Tinubu, for president and vice president, respectively. This has caused division among the party. Many contend that this goes against the unwritten political tradition of the nation, which stipulates that Christians and Muslims must hold the two highest offices in the nation.

The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) has registered about 12 million new voters since the most recent election in 2015, bringing the total number of registered voters for the 2023 election cycle to at least 96 million. More than 70% of these new voters are between the ages of 18 and 34. After "cleaning up the data of new registrants by deleting ineligible individuals like as underage minors, non-Nigerians, and those who registered more than once," according to INEC, this number would fall to 95 million (Akintaro, 2022).

Young people are becoming involved in politics in greater numbers, and many of them are running for political office. The "feeling of an election that is more open for

candidates who perhaps have the honesty and openness that young people are seeking" has been partially blamed for this exceptional excitement for political involvement. It is also a sign of increased confidence in Nigeria's voting system due to the INEC's ongoing digitalization initiatives, the impact of social media, and the country's expanding population.

The INEC has added more than 56,800 more polling units (a 41% increase) to make up for the rise in voters, bringing the total number of voting sites for the year to 176,846 (Sobechi and Omolaoye, 2022). Teams of four election workers, numbering 707,384 in total, including tens of thousands of supervisors, collation officers, returning officers, and officials from local to national levels, will be sent by the electoral authority to each polling unit. In order to do this, almost 1 million poll workers will need to be transported by land and sea, and goods will also need to be sent to places that sometimes can only be reached by roadways, which offer a great danger of terrorism and criminal activity (Sobechi and Omolaoye, 2022). Tens of thousands of journalists, election observers, and security personnel will also go to these areas. The environment surrounding the elections in 2023 may be the most diversified ever seen in Nigeria.

The 2023 Nigerian Election and the Impact of Digital Political Advertising

Digital media platforms are private companies with the authority to establish their own content policies. There is no requirement that they provide advertising spaces to every contender, unlike broadcast stations. This is due to the fact that the materials they create are not subject to any regulations. On the other hand, digital media platforms are not in any way regarded as publishers, in contrast to newspapers and television networks. They are regarded as internet service providers, and as such, they are not responsible for the material that users upload on their websites in line with Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act. For running deceptive political adverts and allowing inaccurate material on their websites, they are shielded from legal consequences.

The ability of digital media platforms to engage users via "micro targeting" is the last and maybe most important difference between them and earlier forms of media (Bayer, 2020). One approach to broadly define micro targeting is as "a marketing method that exploits people's data—about what they love, who they are related to, what their demographics are, what they have purchased, and more—to break them into small groups for content targeting." This strategy has been more problematic over the last few years when it comes to targeted political advertisements (Bayer, 2020).

Each of the major platforms has its own rules about the kind of political commercials

they will run and the types of targeting they will authorize for those advertisements. The fast use of digital technology in Nigeria's elections begs the question of what may be motivating the country's political scene, which is dominated by older people in their 50s and elderly. (Akinyemi & Mobolaji, 2022). The first justification is because a lot of people think digital media sites have political value. Since young people make up more than 60% of Nigeria's population and the great majority of them obtain their political news from social media, digital advertising has enormous financial advantages for politicians (Oxford Analytica, 2021). The language of today's youth is social media. On digital media, information travels fast, and online advertisements could have an impact that goes beyond their intended audience. Digital media's capacity to instantly mobilize individuals and react to societal change is another factor for this. Similar to this, using digital platforms rather than traditional media makes it much easier to measure how much interaction and engagement a consumer has with an advert.

Perhaps the most important factor contributing to the rise in popularity of digital political marketing is the low cost of employing precision approaches to target voters (Akinyemi & Mobolaji, 2022). Politicians may now target certain demographics at particular moments with particular language, making it simpler to specifically sway undecided voters. Comparatively speaking to conventional marketing, all of this may be done at a far lower financial outlay. This technique, also known as micro-targeting, has been deemed detrimental to democracy because it has the ability to change people's attitudes toward public discourse in ways that they are not consciously aware of.

Digital advertising has grown in recent years, both in terms of its strategies and its reach, as a result of the public's increasing propensity for reading news online. As a consequence, social media sites have implemented more open use of guidelines for their systems and tightened restrictions on political advertising.

On February 25, 2023, Nigeria will hold one of the elections with one of the highest stakes that the country has seen in recent decades. Voters around the nation will cast ballots to choose their next president, vice president, and all 469 members of the Senate and House of Representatives, governors and legislative representatives from each of the 36 states that make up the federation (The Guardian, 2022). It will be the first time in Nigeria's 63 years of independence that the country will have secured three consecutive peaceful transitions of power if this attempt is successful. However, political adverts for the election is an important indicator of how democracy has been progressing incrementally since 1999, when the military last ruled and it would affect political stakeholders perception and attitude to the 2023 election. In the event that it is not effective, however, it will be a significant setback for a nation that is already suffering

from major threats to its security, polarization, and economic woes. As such, digital political advertising is very critical for the 2023 election.

Other nations on Africa, particularly those that look to Nigeria as an example of how democratic procedures should be carried out, will be paying close attention to the election taking place in Nigeria, which is the most populous nation on the African continent and this can easily be accessed through digital media and political adverts. Whatever the conclusion, it is probable that Nigeria's neighbors would be affected too by digital political messages as such messages would shape their attitudes and interest on the 2023 election. In other African governments, where democratic norms and the use of digital political advertising have been slipping, the outcome of this election might send a powerful message to them on the need to wake and utilise digital political advertising.

Theoretical Framework

Cultivation Theory

The concept of cultivation was propounded by George Gerbner (Asemah, Nwanmuo & Nkwa-Uwaoma, 2017). This theory contends that individuals are more susceptible to the messages that the media communicates, the more often they consume various forms of media. People's viewpoints and attitudes often correspond with what they read, see, and hear in the media because of how powerful the influence is. This theory holds that exposure to the media especially television enhances a person's chance of forming certain worldviews, beliefs, and life presumptions. All media exposure, not only television, is affected by this, and it holds true for all media exposure. The theory adds that the world that is shown in the media is often quite different from the one that really exists (Nwaoboli, 2022).

On a variety of social and cultural topics, such as sexuality, gender, race, politics and other topics, the media provide a broad range of ideas and points of view. Over time, a clear image of the human groups that exist emerges, and viewers start to internalize these concepts, which they later use as a guide for the rest of their lives. People tend to form certain values, beliefs, attitudes, and needs as a result of how often they are exposed to media content. These new preconceived notions alter how people see them, which in turn alters how they view the outside world (Martin, 2014). As a result, people's habits unintentionally affect their behaviour and cognitive abilities. People today more than ever, look to the media to help them understand the complicated web of laws, values, and attitudes that govern the society in which they live. It is projected that this trend will persist in the foreseeable future.

Cultivation theory studies the media to understand what it does and how it impacts an audience (Okorie, 2012). This theory is relevant to this research as it shows that attitudes, behaviour and ideas cultivated from digital political advertising may have implications on the 2023 general elections in Nigeria. In other words, the electorates' behaviours may change as a result of digital technologies and political messages people get from them as regards the 2023 general elections.

METHODOLOGY

Survey research design was used for the study. Benin City served as the population of the study while the Taro Yamane's sample size determination technique was used to determine the sample size. The sampling technique was random sampling technique while the sample size was four hundred. Four hundred copies of questionnaire were randomly distributed while 395 copies were retrieved and 5 copies lost because the respondents did not return them. Data gathered were presented in bar charts.

DATA PRESENTATION

Chart 1

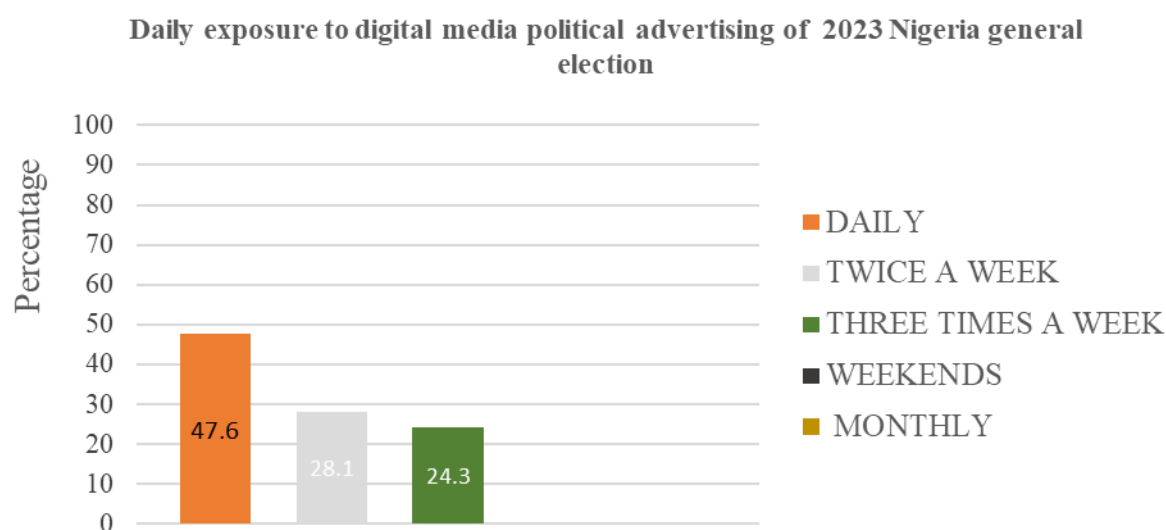


Chart 1 shows that majority (47.6%) of the participants are exposed to digital political advertising messages of the 2023 presidential election. This shows that the exposure to digital political advertising of the election is high and in essence, that political advertising was also high on digital media platforms.

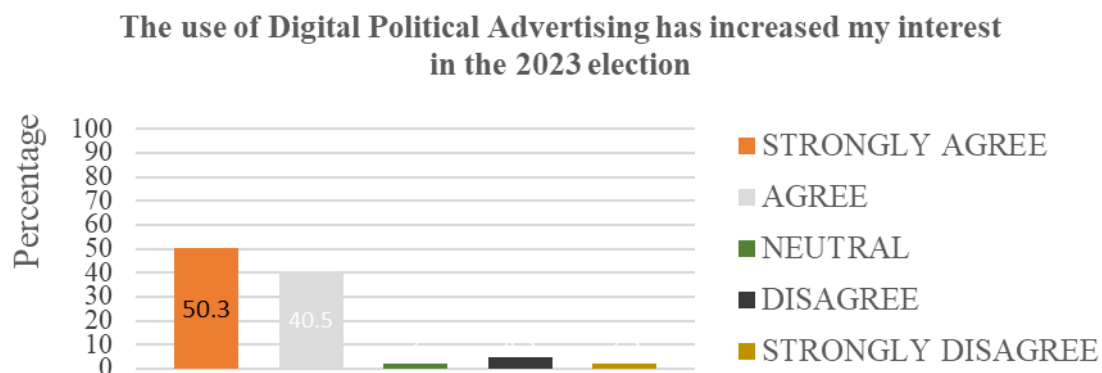
Chart 2

Chart 2 shows that 199 (45.6%) of the respondents strongly agreed the use of digital Political advertising has increased their interest in the 2023 election, 160 (40.5%) agreed, 8 (2.0%) were neutral, 18 (4.3%) disagreed while 10 (2.3%) of the respondents strongly disagreed. This shows that digital political advertising has been effective in increasing Benin City residents' interest in the 2023 general elections in Nigeria.

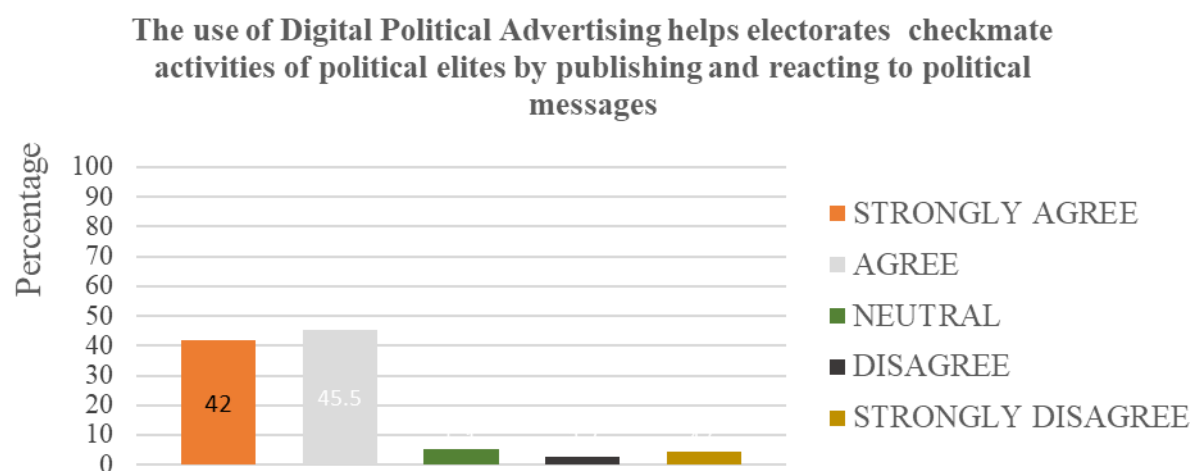
Chart 3

Chart 3 shows that 166 (42%) of the respondents believe the use of Digital Political Advertising helps electorates checkmate activities of political elites by publishing and reacting to political messages, 180(45.5%) respondents agreed. While twenty (20), eleven(11) and eighteen (18) respondents respectively were neutral, disagreed and strongly disagreed with the assertion.

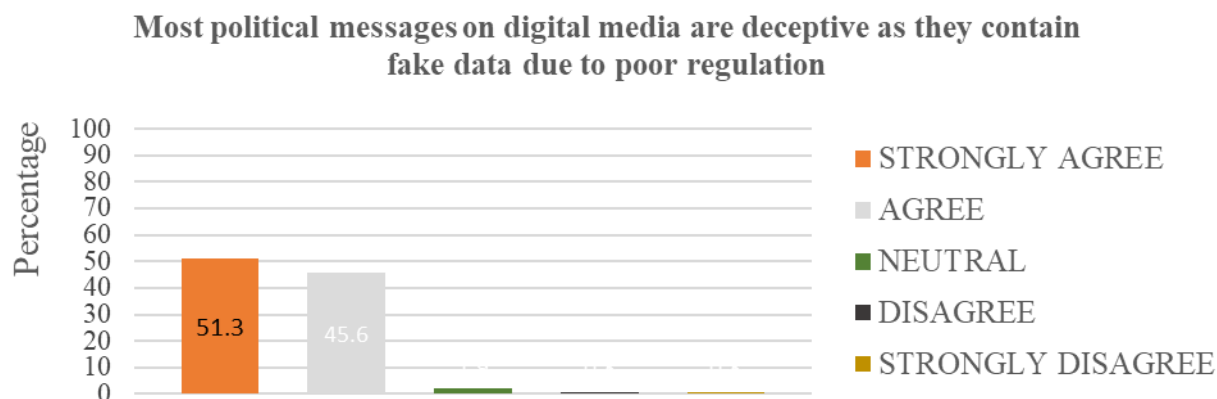
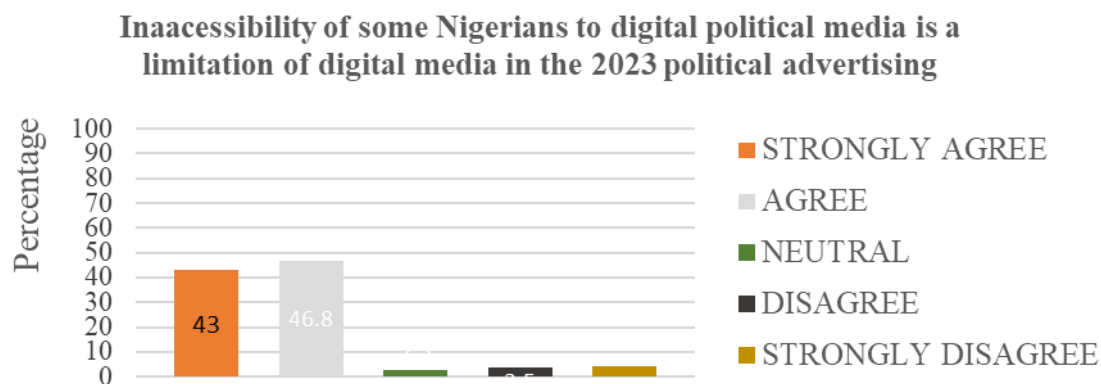
Chart 4

Chart 4 depicts that most political messages on digital media are deceptive as they contain fake data due to poor regulation. This is confirmed from the data as 51.3% and 45.65% of the respondents respectively strongly agreed and agreed with the assertion.

Chart 5

This chart illustrates that 89.8% of the respondents affirm that inaccessibility of some Nigerians to digital political media is a limitation of digital media in the 2023 political advertising. This may not be unconnected with those in the rural areas of Nigeria who barely have access to digital technologies and when they even do, lack technologies and resources such as constant power supply to sustain them.

Chart 6

**Ways forward to the limitations of Digital Political advertising for
2023 general elections**



As indicated on Chart 6, the way forward to the limitations of digital political advertising for 2023 general elections include objective censorship of media contents, political stakeholders verification of political messages, education of political stakeholders on digital media use and complementing digital political messages with traditional media.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Digital advertising is a fundamental aspect that contributes to the survival, success or failure of any organisation in contemporary times. In particular, attitudes toward digital advertisements are important mediators of advertising effectiveness, both in terms of the impact the adverts have on the audiences' cognition, and in terms of the impact such adverts have on individuals' behavioral intentions just like the cultivation theory used in this study states.

This study found that digital advertising has come to stay and that amidst it is being extensively used by political stakeholders in projecting the agenda and ideologies of the political contenders in the 2023 general elections in Nigeria. As such, political digital advertising cannot be jettisoned by any political party or stakeholders who wish to effectively sell their ideologies irrespective of the presence of traditional advertising and media.

The study revealed that digital advertising has been effective in promoting the political contenders for the 2023 general elections in Nigeria, it is however not a substitute for traditional advertising nor an amputation of it as the latter also have myriads of advantages devoid in digital advertising.

That digital political advertising has various imperatives in this digital era and these are related to the increase of political stakeholders' interest in the 2023 election such as promotion of political parties and contenders, introduction of party manifesto, creation of good public image for political parties and stakeholders, influencing political stakeholders' perception of political parties and flag bearers. This agrees with several researchers' studies such as Asemah and Edegoh (2012) which shows that the digital media is effective in advertising brands. Also, Asemah, Nwaoboli & Nwoko (2022) and Nwaoboli and Asemah (2021) also avow that the digital media can influence peoples attitude and cause a change in behaviour.

The way forward to the limitations of digital political advertising for 2023 general elections include objective censorship of media contents, political stakeholders' verification of political messages, education of political stakeholders on digital media use and complementing digital political messages with traditional media.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Digital political advertising has strength and weaknesses; however its strengths dominate its weaknesses. Based on the findings of this study, the research concludes that political digital advertising is imperative in the 2023 presidential election. This is because of its relative distinguishing factors over traditional advertising such as global reach, cost effectiveness, quick feedback and spontaneity. Also, because of its persuasive, informational, and educational qualities, the digital media may be used during election campaigns to help garner support for a certain political party or candidate. In order to effectively carry out their political operations, political parties and candidates need to make advantage of digital media. Based on the findings of the study, it is recommended that:

1. Political parties and stakeholders who are yet to adopt digital advertising should do so as it has various higher imperatives over traditional political advertising
2. Political parties and stakeholder who are using digital advertising as their only advertising method should complement their efforts using traditional media in order to get a higher reach especially from political stakeholders who do not have digital advertising reception gadgets
3. Digital advertising has poor regulations and statutory control hence unethical practices should be checkmated by the Advertising Regulatory Council of Nigeria (ARCON) to avoid unhealthy and offensive adverts being churned out to the public and a clear statutory control body should be spelt out for political digital advertisers and agencies.

4. The government should provide basic amenities to enable rural communities have access to digital political advertisements which will help them make informed decisions during elections.

REFERENCES

- Akintaro, S. (2022). Top 10 states with the highest number of registered voters as of August 1, 2022. Retrieved from <https://nairametrics.com/2022/08/02/top-10-states-with-the-highest-number-of-registered-voters-as-of-august-1-2022/>.
- Akinyemi, A.I., & Mobolaji, J.W. (2022, July 18). 'Nigeria's large, youthful population could be an asset or a burden'. The Conversation.
- Arens, W., Weigold, M., & Arens, C. (2008). *Contemporary advertising*. New York: Richard Irwin Inc.
- Asemah, E. S. & Edegoh, L. O. N. (2012). New media and political advertising: Prospects and challenges. *African Research Review*, 6(4), 248-265.
- Asemah, E. S., Nwaoboli, E. P., Nwoko, Q. T. (2022). Textual analysis of select social media hate speech messages against clergymen in Nigeria. *GVU Journal of Management and Social Sciences*, 7(2), 1-14.
- Asemah, E. S., Nwammuo, A. N., & Nkwam-Uwaoma, A. O. A (2017). *Theories and models of communication (Rev ed.)*. Jos: Jos University Press.
- Bayer, J. (2020). Double harm to voters: Data-driven micro-targeting and democratic public discourse. *Internet Policy Review*, 9(1), 1-17.
- Chiakaan, J. G., Egbulefu, C. C., Kpera W. R., & Kaigama, P. K. (2021). Political Public Relations as a Tool for Combating Vote buying in Nigeria for Development Purposes. *ASEAN Journal of Community Engagement*, 5(2), 335-354.
- Egbulefu, C. C., Nwokoro, C. I. & Onyenekwe, O. N. (2020). Aligning consumers' Sensory perception of advertised brands in Nigeria: native black soap in perspective. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Approach and Studies*, 7(3), 1 – 12.
- Kotler, P., & Armstrong, D. (2010). *Principles of Marketing (13 ed.)*. NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall.

- Nott, L. (2020). Political Advertising on Social Media Platforms. Retrieved from https://www.americanbar.org/groups/crsj/publications/human_rights_magazine_home/voting-in-2020/political-advertising-on-social-media-platforms/
- Nwaizugbo, I. C. (2004). *Principles of marketing*. Enugu: New Generation books.
- Martin, R. L. (2014). The big lie of strategic planning. *Harvard Business Review*, 92(3), 78–84
- Nwaoboli, E. P. (2022). Awareness and Perception of Social Media trial of Chidinmma Ojukwu’s Alleged Murder case among Edo State residents. Unpublished research submitted to the University of Benin, Edo State. DOI: 10.13140/RG.2.2.28215.19369
- Nwaoboli, E. P. & Asemah, E. S (2021). Textual Analysis of Select Online Media Use of Fear Appeals in the Promotion of COVID-19 Vaccination in Nigeria. In Asemah, E. S. (Ed.). *Communication, Pandemic and Civil Unrest in Nigeria* (pp. 1-11), Franklead Printing Company.
- Nwosu, I. (1992). *Speech, media writing and copy*. Enugu: ACENA Ventures Limited.
- Okorie, N. (2020). Reality Television, African Identities, and the Big Brother Africa show: An Experiential Inquest. *Online Journal of Communication and Media Technologies*, 10(3), e202017
- Ojekwe, G.I. (2016). Political advert campaigns and voting behaviour: Akinwunmi Ambode’s 2015 election campaign in Lagos State. *Journal of African Elections*, 15 (2), 13-27.
- Olujide, J.O., Adeyemi, S. L & Gbadeya, R.A. (2010). Nigerian Electorates ‘Perception of Political Advertising and Election Campaigns. Retrieved from <http://www.gensonline.com/rjss/rjss/2010/52-60.pdf>.
- Oxford Analytica (2021). *Political value of social media will rise in Africa [Expert Briefings]*. Oxford Analytica.
- Paatelainen, L., Kannasto, E., & Isotalus, P. (2022, January). Functions of hybrid media: How parties and their leaders use traditional media in their social media campaign communication. *Frontiers in Communication* [Online Edition].
- Sabbagh, D. (2018, March 23). ‘Rise of digital politics: why UK parties spend big on Facebook’. The Guardian.

Sobechi, L. & Omolaoye, S. (2022). INEC unveils 176,846 polling units for 2023 elections. Retrieved from <https://guardian.ng/politics/inec-unveils-176846-polling-units-for-2023-elections/>

Statista (2022). 'Digital political advertising spending in the United States from 2008 to 2020 (in million U.S. dollars)' [Data Set].

The Guardian (2022). 2023: INEC publishes final list of candidates Retrieved from <https://guardian.ng/news/2023-inec-publishes-final-list-of-candidates/>