Repositioning Nigeria: Application of Marketing Communication Tools by Political Parties in Campaign Programs

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Abstract: The study examined application of marketing communication tools by political parties in campaign programs in Cross River State in repositioning Nigeria. Campaign programs have been marred with the use of thugs for rallies, attacks, programs and ideologies between opposing political parties. In order to curb these problems, the study examines the effect of advertising, word-of-mouth marketing, and public relations in campaign programs. Survey research design was adopted, in which questionnaire were administered to 200 respondents in four local government Area in Cross River State. Three hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance. The results show that marketing communication tools enhance political campaign programs. It was, therefore, recommended that political parties should employ the use of intense advertising without intemperate words to achieve campaign objectives peacefully.

Keywords: Marketing communication, Political parties, Advertising, Word-of-mouth marketing, Public relations, Campaign programs

1. Introduction

The most expensive marketing effort put in existence today is basically in political campaign (Gordon, Lovett, Shachar, Arcenearx, Moorthy, Perres, Rao, Sen, Sobern & Urminsky, 2012), but set goals and objectives can only be achieved peacefully if the right marketing communication strategies are applied. Nigeria can be repositioned in diverse ways; by a political leader, organizations, institutions, agencies and political parties. Every political leader in Nigeria today emerges from one political party or the other, which was achieved by one form of marketing communication tool or the other. This is why marketing communication is seen as a useful tool in contemporary political arena. To a large extent, it serves as a way of repositioning the nation in the political perspectives, because it brings about peaceful campaign demonstrations and elections that create positive impression on the image of the nation across the globe.

Before now, the conventional ways of campaigning were posters, rallies, speeches, and even intuition, opined by Kotler (1982) as cited in (Schafferer,2006). The introduction of classical methods of campaign like advertising, word-of-mouth marketing (i.e. celebrity endorsement), public relations (social media platform i.e. Facebook, YouTube, newsletter, brochure/catalogues, community relations) and so on, has marked the dawn of a new day in the political arena.

Despite the importance of campaigns in the electoral process as stated in the Nigerian Constitution of (1999); political campaign programs has been marred with use of thugs for rallies, attacks from opposing parties, candidates, programs and slander between opposing parties. It is also well known that campaigns cannot entirely be carried without the use of intemperate and slanderous languages, which does not tell well of a country that wants to be named among committee of nations that can effectively conduct its elections without slander, ballot snatching and bloodshed. This, therefore, pose a question as to whether Nigeria political environment can be repositioned through the application of marketing communication tools in political campaign programs in Nigeria?

The broad objective is to determine the impact of marketing communication tools in political campaign programs. The specific objectives include;

- To examine the effect of Advertising in political parties campaign programs in Cross River State
- To analyze the use of word-of-mouth marketing in political parties campaign programs
- To investigate the influence of public relations in political parties campaign programs.

2. Theoretical Framework

This study is hinged on the following theories:

- The system theory
- The theory of persuasion

The system theory was postulated in 1940 by Von Bertalanffy, and it assumes that real system is not selfish and interacts consistently with its environment. System theory is a useful way for communication practitioners to understand the relationship between an organization and its publics (Smith 2011). It explains the relationship that exists between an individual political party and its public (Grunig, 1995). This relationship makes it possible for any adjusting changes in both the political, economic and social environment. Paletz, Pearson and Willis (1977) postulates that political parties' intention is to create a spot which will have some unique aspect to gain immediate attention of the people, and to create awareness or solve problems that will remain in the people's memory, that will aid in motivating them to action. Hence, this theory makes it easier for political parties to achieve this purpose.

Theory of persuasion on the hand was developed in the 6th century by the Greeks philosophers. It assumes that persuasion can be used as an attempt to change or influenced perception, behavior and cognition of the public's. It explains that there should be credibility and reputation in campaign messages. There is low level of persuasion if the message is not credible or reliable. Application of this theory serves as a motivating factor for political parties to actualized campaign goals and objectives.

1.1. The Concept of Marketing and Politics

The American marketing Association (AMA, 2014) referred to marketing as an organizational function and a set of processes for creating, communicating, and delivering value to customers and for managing customer relationships in ways that benefit the organization and its stakeholders. It is obvious in this definition that marketing is all encompassing, and can be applied in any sector as earlier mentioned, the organizational function and set of processes emphasis the political arena and efforts exerted by the different campaign parties, communicating and delivering values to customers talks about campaign promises by the aspirants and the fulfillment of such promises, managing customer relationships in ways that benefit the organization and its stakeholders has to do with ways in which aspirants applies the various marketing tools in order to know how to relate with voters for the benefit of the aspirants. Kotler,(2010) defined marketing as a social and managerial process, by which individual and organizations obtained what they need and want through creating and exchanging value with others. He explains that the basic tools firms use to achieve organizational success should include a mix of the four (4) Ps, of which each has the ability to give customers the same satisfaction at different times. The product includes promises and favor conveyed by the aspirants. The price is electoral support, and the voter is the customer. Promotion includes advertising, word-of-mouth (celebrity endorsement), public relations and other campaign activities (Schafferer, 2006). Advertising is defined as a paid form of no personal presentation and promotion of ideas, goods, or services by an identified sponsor (Kotler, 2010). Word-of-mouth marketing is a situation whereby promotion is being carried out by a satisfied customer telling others how much they enjoy a particular product or service. Public relations are to build mutually beneficial relationships between the organization and its various publics (Wilcox & Cameron, 2006). In other words, it is the process or platform through which there is a common relationship between two people or more.

Marketing strategy, on the other hand, is a game plan of an organization to optimize opportunities in a given market (Agbonifoh, Ogwo, Nnolim, & Nkamnebe, 2007).The application of any of the marketing communication tools in the political arena is what gives an individual party edge over the other and what makes it unique. Knowing how a strategy works is essential for success. A strategy that works for A in a particular segment may not work for B. Okigbo (1992) in (Pate, et al 2013) is of the opinion that every electoral campaign requires one form of marketing strategy or the other, since it is seen to be useful in campaign programs for the promotion of personalities, problems, issues and so on. Hence, no matter how simple a marketing strategy seem, it is bound to achieve success in any turbulent situation. Political marketing is the application of marketing principles in achieving campaign objectives.

Stromback et al., (2010) in (Gbadeyan, 2011) is of the opinion that political marketing is the application of marketing principle to politics. Thus, it is the relationship between marketing and political science. For any political party to exhibit new dimensions in campaign programs, political marketing is a strategic weapon. The competitive and dynamic nature of political parties, calls for the various political marketing tools. Henneberge, (2007) in (Gbadeyan, 2011) states that political marketing should be central to the understanding not only of modern elections but also conducts of the government and democracy itself.

3.2. The Political Arena

Political campaign is sacrosanct and consist series of groups and individuals. It cannot be carried out in a vacuum and will do well in the following arena as suggested by Gbadeyan (2011) and other scholars. (i)The parliamentary arena-it consists of members of parliament from different parties. The emphasis here is to achieve maximum parliament influence. (ii) The electoral arena-has to do with the voters and the strategic goal is to maximize voters support.(iii)The internal arena-it include members and the activities of the party, and the aim is maximization of internal coercion of the political organizations.(iv) The media arena-it consist of journalists, editors, and so on within the media, which aim is to maximize positive publicity and do away with negative publicity.

3.3. Political Parties and Campaign Programs in Nigeria

Political parties are election-oriented which primary motives are to get their various candidates into office (O'Brien, & Cole, 1997), to achieve this, they need the requisite marketing communication tools. Thus, they serve as the pivot which the entire democratic process revolves, playing a plethora of roles ranging from acting as platforms for candidates and also creating a link between the people and the government (Ebegbulem, 2010).Examples of notable political parties in Nigeria are the People's Democratic Party (PDP), Action Congress (AC), and All Progressive People Party (APC) and so on. Wayne, et al., (1997) referred to the political party as an organization whose goal is to win elective office in order to influence the policies of the government.

It is the mechanism that is applied in order to achieve electoral objectives. Ujo, (2004) points out that in no occasion should campaign programs be carried out with abusive language, but this is hard to find in our contemporary campaign. Pate, Nwabueze,& Odiong (2013) opines that political parties pay little attention to marketing, that the notable period that saw marketing play in politics was in 1993 election of June 12 between M.K.O Abiola and Bashir Tofa. The relationship Abiola had with the then citizens of Nigeria, Lagos state and his good deeds, word-of-mouth marketing, advertising and other marketing tool played a key role in his campaign, this made him defeat Tofa considerably in almost all the state.

David Axelrod, Obama's political advisor, has been using various combinations of marketing strategies to achieve political objectives. Dennisw (2008) has it in the New York Times, April, 1, 2007 that Axelrod was known to be useful to assist Rahm Emmanuel the present Mayor of Chicago in the 2006 campaign to take over the house of representative from republicans. He also used this success to help Deval Patrick become governor of Massachusetts, in the United States. What Axelrod did basically was not just to sell policies/issues but also personalities and leadership. Lees-marshment, (2010) points out that political marketing is a fundamental part of political life. Presidents and prime ministers, politicians and political parties, government, departments, and councils all uses political marketing to ensure the understanding of the people they intend to serve, their wants, needs and in deciding on what policies to adopt (Lees-Marshment, 2010).Gbadeyan (2011) observed that in politics, it is assumed that there is a political market where aspirants seek the electorates' support in order to win an election. Also, Dennisw, (2008) points out that Axelrod used marketing strategies to market Obama's personality, policies, and issues. Marketing strategies in campaign programs have been in existence, and has been found useful; this is the reason why Presidential candidates of the United States of America has been exploring various marketing strategies in their campaign programs. Wikipedia (2015) has it that Hilary Clinton the wife of the former United States president has been using tools like Advertising, Public relations/publicity, and word-of-mouth and so on to achieve success in her campaign so far, others are Bernie Sanders, Chris Christie, and Jeb Bush.

Therefore, political parties in Nigeria are encouraged to employ the use of classical marketing communication tools in campaign programs. Dr. Nwodo the PDP chairman nationwide came with a campaign to reposition the party for positive value. In vanguard newspaper of November 27 (2010), Ekwujuru Prince will observed that political parties now knows the importance of marketing communication in dissemination of political messages, this is why the Cross

River State Governor Prof. Ben Ayade deemed it fit to utilized advertising, word-of-mouth and public relations as a marketing strategies to promote himself in the 2015 governorship campaign and his intention for the 260km super highway and the Calabar seaport, which has been actualized.

4. Application of Marketing Communication Tools in Political Parties Campaign Programs

4.1. Advertising

The focus here is advertising and not "comparative advertising" which is aggressive and aims at negativity. Wikipedia (2015) suggests that comparative advertising damage the honor and credibility of advertising, it should be stored more effectively or discouraged. A political party who is involved in advertising itself must make it attractive to viewer's. Thus, it serves as a way of passing a message and changing a viewer's intention for good.

Paletz, et al., (1977) suggests that politics in advertising attempts to persuade through an appeal to the viewer's emotions. Kotler & Keller, (2007) states that advertising campaign helps create and improve clients overall communication effectiveness. In order to persuade, or remind the audience of any message, advertising is a good way to inform and persuade irrespective of the purpose (Kotler&Armstrong 1987). The use of slogans and symbols are another way in which political parties campaign in advertising can make their messages more memorable as suggests by (Paletz, et al., 1997; Ball & Peters, 2000). Lazauskas, (2012) points out that president Barack Obama's 2008 campaign was a big success because of the application of advertising.

Furthermore, the basic component that should be borne in the mind of political parties in advertising campaign programs is advertising copy. Berkowitz, Kerin, Hartley, & Rudelius (1994) referred to advertising copy as messages that are put forward to the target audience through magazines, newspaper, television or radio. It is of basic importance that every message given be informational, persuasive (Berkowitz et al., 1994) and consistent, because this is what the target audience looks out for, especially in political messages. It should be able to answer questions such as what solution it can proffer to the people's problem, for example, the All Progressive People's Congress(APC) in the 2015 general election was known with the slogan ''Change''. The 16th advertising celebration organized by The Advertising Practitioner Council of Nigeria (APCON), Senator Lornem David posits that the role of Advertising in the context of the Nigerian politician cannot be ruled out when viewed within the comprehensive political marketing map. Hence, since every audience or individual is known to speak and understand a term of its own, (Berkowitz, et al., 1994) suggests that every political party campaign should select the right media and terms so that every message advertised will best be understood by the audience. Thus, the use of symbols is also important as opined by (Balls et al., 2000).

4.2. Word-of-mouth Marketing (Communication)

Just the way voters require information to know the right candidate, candidates also needs information to give voters positive impression about themselves. Being in politics without using the right words may mar ones' political effort. Wikipedia (2015) points out that 75 percent of all consumers' conversations today about brands happen with word-of-mouth marketing, 15 percent over the phone and 10 percent online.

Word-of-mouth marketing is an influence exerted on others by way of knowledge or personality. Organization tries to identify opinion leaders or reference groups of their target market in order to achieve faster organizational attainment (Kotler, 2010).When a consumer is not satisfied with any product the reaction of such will be negative. Word-of-mouth is a useful tool in today's campaign programs and the competitive political environment. Political parties' strifes ensure that they get themselves familiar with the voters by being socially responsible. This strategy pattern the ways and thought of aspirants for them to earn a positive response from voters. Argan & Argan (2012), notes that oral communication is one of the most powerful promotional tools, he is of the opinion that communication liaison officers for candidates should use word-of-mouth to disseminate information to create agenda in order to win an election, Butler (1998) in Argan & Argan is of the opinion that word-of-mouth marketing is more influential on behavior than another marketer-controlled source. In the 2015 presidential election, senator Bukola Saraki used word-of-mouth marketing communication to calm the Nigeria citizens after the postponement of the general election from February 14 to March 28 saying "I charge Nigerians to be calm, non-violent and steadfast." We must be determined to make sure postponement does not disenfranchise us…'' (Wikipedia, 2015).Word-of-mouth marketing is seen to produce the required outcome when it is used timely and appropriately. It is the easiest way of getting information. As a result

political parties should ensure that every message passed, especially by celebrities are believable one since consumers find word of mouth as a compelling source of information (Argan et al., 2012).

4.3. Public Relations

Stromback & Kiousis (2011) in Stromback & Kiousis (2013) notes that while the practice of political public relations is old, more concerted efforts to apply public relations theory in political context is new. This implies that contemporary political public relations strategies have ancient root. The idea behind every successful organization is to attract new customer and retain existing customers. Cognitive dissonance arises when a customer is not satisfied with a product/service. Public relations expert (Wilcox & Cameron, 2006) suggests that public relations are to build mutually beneficial relationships between the organization and its various parties. This means that political party policies and actions should be beneficial to both the party and its publics. Public relations serve as a key role in campaigns (Corthell, 2008). Thus, it is the strategic communication activities of actors participating in the political process that aims at informative and persuasive goals in order to realize single interests Holtz-Bacha in (Corthell, 2008). Political parties' strife's to position itself in the mind of the consumer and to survive in the political arena; this entails that each party creates an avenue where there will be mutual understanding between the party and its members. Pate et al., (2013), observe that in Nigeria, the lack of understanding between political parties and its members has led many hard–core members to seek political fortune elsewhere; recently the Bayelsa state governor has decamped from PDP to APC due to caliber of defectors of the PDP party members'', others are Mr. Chibuike Amaechi (Rivers), Alhaji Ahmed Abdul Fatah (Kwara), Dr. Rabiu Musa Kwankwaso (Kano), Alhaji Murtala Nyako (Adamawa), and Alhaji Aliyu Wamakko (Sokoto) (This day newspaper, October 24, 2015). Public relations as a marketing strategy is used to ameliorate such cases by designating the party spoke person or through any of the social platform to honestly communicate with key publics and take responsibility for solving whatever misunderstanding. For example, the public relation was used by Martin Luther King Jr. in Washington D.C in the civil rights movement to create public awareness and support (Wilcox, et al., 2006). As a strategic marketing tool, it seeks to help political parties achieve and manage the strategic relationship through the use of publications, news releases, speeches, community relations websites/the internet, tradeshow and so on, which can have a strong impact on the public at a lower cost. With this type of strategy, it is easier to reach specific household (Sodaro, et al., 2001).

Satisfying marketing opportunities through public relations means that political parties should have a cordial one-on-one relationship with its audience, and thus enabling the political marketer to have an understanding of the marketplace, thus serves as a guiding factor between the campaign parties and the citizens.
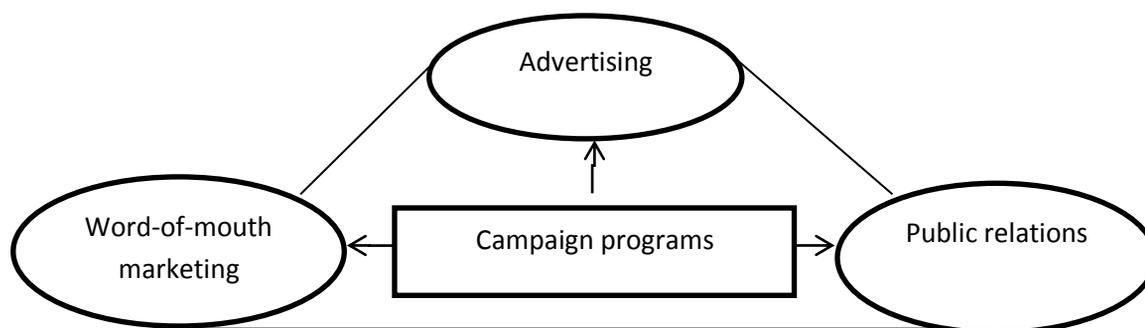

Figure 1: Diagrammatic representation of marketing communication tools in campaign programs
Source: Field survey (2015)

The above diagram shows the various types of marketing tools and their effect on political party campaign programs. Each arrow indicates that any of the marketing tools will yield a positive outcome when applied in campaign programs. Thus, it will be more effective if party aspirants are feasible.

5. Methodology

The study used the survey research design to evaluate the perception of respondents on the impact of marketing communication tools on political campaign programs in four local government areas namely: Calabar Municipality, Calabar-South, Akpabuyo and Odukpani in Cross River State. These respondents comprise politicians, campaign officials and members of notable political parties. Primary data was predominately used through a questionnaire

developed on a five-point likert scale. The estimated population of the study was 222,980 for Odukpani LGA, 221,400 for Calabar South LGA, 212,340 for Calabar Municipal LGA, and 314,750 for Akpabuyo LGA respectively. Stratified sampling technique was used to select 200 respondents from the four LGAs – 50 respondents for each. After distributing the questionnaire, only 192 was correctly filled and returned, and it was used to test the hypotheses with the regression analytical tool and ANOVA at 5 percent level of significance.

The following hypotheses were tested:
H_{o1}: *There is no significant effect between advertising and political parties' campaign programs.*
Ho_2: *Word-of-mouth marketing does not significantly encourage voters support in campaign programs.*
H_{o3}: *A public relations does not significantly enhance political parties' campaign programs.*

6. Presentation, Analysis of Data and Discussion of Findings

200 copies of questionnaires were distributed; out of this number, only 192 questionnaires were duly filled and returned representing 96 percent response rate. Responses on the perception of respondents on the impact of marketing communication tools on political campaign were relative as presented in Table 4.1 below:

Table 1: Between subject factors

Variable		Value Label	N
Effective use of Advertising on campaign	5	strongly agreed	167
	4	Agreed	22
	3	Undecided	3
Use of word-of-mouth	5	strongly agreed	163
	4	Agreed	26
	3	Undecided	3
Relevance of Public relation	5	strongly agreed	132
	4	Agreed	51
	3	Undecided	5
	2	Disagreed	4
Political campaign	5	strongly agreed	153
	4	Agreed	23
	3	Undecided	6
	2	Disagreed	10

Source: Field Survey, 2015

Hypothesis one
H_{o1}: *There is no significant effect between advertising and political parties' campaign programs.*

Table 2: Anova/model summary

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	R	R^2
1	Regression	25.524	1	25.524	35.281	.000[b]	.396[a]	.157
	Residual	137.455	190	.723				

Predictors: (Constant), Advertising

In Table 4 below, R connotes a high level of relationship between campaign programs and word-of-mouth marketing. F value of 30.097 also shows a high level of explanatory power of the independent variable. We can, therefore, conclude that political parties who employ the use of word-of-mouth marketing in the campaign are bound to win. Table 2 shows the extent to which the dependent variable varies with the independent variable, where t-statics of 5.486 was also significant at 0.05 level of significant. H_1 which signifies that word-of-mouth marketing significantly encourages voters support in campaign programs was therefore accepted.

Table 3: Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	7.988	1.002		7.973	.000
	Advertising	.421	.071	3.96	5.940	.000

Dependent Variable: Political Campaign

Hypothesis Two

Ho_2: *Word-of-mouth marketing does not significantly encourage voters support in campaign programs.*

Table 4: Anova/model summary

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	R	R^2
1	Regression	22.287	1	22.287	30.097	.000	.370a	.137
	Residual	140.692	190	.740				
	Total	162.979	191					

Predictors: (Constant), WOMM)
Dependent Variable: Political Campaign

Table 5: Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	8.435	1.003		8.475	.000
	WOMM	.387	.071	.370	5.486	.000

Dependent Variable: Political Campaign

Hypothesis Three

H_{o3}: *A public relation does not significantly enhance political parties' campaign programs.*

Table 6: Anova/model summary

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	R	R^2
1	Regression	18.075	1	18.075	23.699	.000a	.333	.111
	Residual	144.905	190	.763				
	Total	162.979	191					

Predictors: (Constant), Public Relations)
Dependent Variable: Political Campaign

Table 7

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	8.965	1.021		8.779	.000
	Public Relation	.350	.072	.333	4.868	.000

Dependent Variable: Political Campaign

7. Discussion of Findings

It was revealed that political parties who employ the use of one or a combination of the marketing communication tools would have high voters support, and also leading to the peaceful electoral outcome. This was evidentially portrayed in the outcome of hypothesis one which revealed that political parties who employ the use of advertising in the campaign are bound to win. Advertising is the most commonly used marketing communication tool as noted by the some of the campaign officials in Calabar municipality. They agreed that with advertising tools such as newspaper, radio could easily disseminate campaign messages, even to an average Nigerian. They strongly agreed that advertising is the fastest form of strategy for campaign and a wider reach. The public when exposed to information learn a lot, most especially from Television news, and Newspapers (Apospori et. al., 2010) in (Gbadeyan, 2011)

Hypothesis two revealed that word-of-mouth marketing has a strong influence on voters behaviour, this finding corroborates Argan et al., (2012), who admitted that word-of-mouth marketing encourages other voters to give their support to a party candidate. Hypothesis three revealed that public relations are significant in enhancing political campaign programs. It was discovered that public relations are a medium through which voters have the opportunity to relate individually with candidates. The result also shows that candidates campaign through a platform such as websites, facebook, histogram, youtube, and so on can easily create a mutual understanding between aspirants and voters.

8. Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

Marketing communication tools play a significant role in the political process of a country and help in ameliorating chaos-prone political atmosphere. In Nigeria, most Politicians currently make use of websites as a platform for their political campaign (Gbadeyan, 2011). Olotu & Ogunro (2013) reveals that relational, political marketing would engender economic, technical, and social ties between voters, parties and electorates through trust, bonding, communication, empathy, reciprocity, shared value, and sociality. Gbadeyan (2011) also reveals that the application of the political marketing strategies on electorate campaign can be achieved purely on merit. However, the notion that politics is a dirty game can also be completely abrogated by electorate and politicians, while ensuring that campaign is done for people with integrity.

Studies have shown that marketing is all embracing, and the political environment is not an exception. The application of marketing communication tools in the political environment creates a platform of peaceful coexistence between electorate, politician, and political parties in order to have a level playing ground rather than engaging in political violence and slandering.

On this note, political parties should endeavor to know how marketing strategies work in campaign programs and how best it can be applied in order to achieve electoral objectives. It is also imperative that parties package themselves in ways that will attract voters through the adequate application of marketing communication as a means of repositioning Nigeria and averting pre and post-election violence. It is, therefore, recommended that political parties should carry out research, strategize, organize, communicate, and deliver value in order to meet the standard of the voters and achieve success in the long run. Political parties should also make use of slogans, and avoid uses of ambiguous words, for easy dissemination of messages.

Recommended also is that the idea of appealing to voters with money before the election should be discouraged. Intense advertising should be embarked upon, without using intemperate languages; and disputes should be resolved amicably to avoid the use of comparative advertising. However, in order to close the loopholes/gaps of using thugs in campaigns, the right marketing strategies should be employed to give each party the opportunity to showcase their unique qualities in expressing themselves.

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