

## **Content Analysis Of 2015 Election Political Advertisements In Selected National Dailies Of Nigeria**

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### **Abstract**

The Nigerian Press in its 156 years of existence from the Reverend Henry Townsend days has been enmeshed in politics and is in fact insoluble from it like Siamese twins. From its debut in November 23<sup>rd</sup> 1859 with “Iwe Iroyin fun Awon Ara Egba ati Yoruba” (Newspaper for the Egbas and Yorubas) the press has taken centre stage in matters affecting all spheres of individual life and collective existence including religion, education, economy and politics among others. The newspaper was actually noted to have educated the growing publics about history and politics of the time. The growth in media has given room for political parties to reach larger groups of constituents, and tailor their adverts to reach new demographics. Unlike the campaigns of the past, advances in media have streamlined the process, giving candidates more options to reach even larger group of constituents with very little physical efforts. Political advertising is a form of campaign used by political parties to reach and influence voters. It can include several different mediums and span several months over the course of a political campaign and the main aim is to sway the audience one way or the other. Political advertisements involve the use of advertising campaigns by politicians to bring their messages to the masses or the electorates in order to explain policy, inform citizens and connect people to their leaders. It is a form of campaigning by political candidates to reach and influence voters through diverse media (including web based media). Politics on the other hand has to do with activities involved in getting and using power in public life, and being able to influence decisions that affect a country or a society. Thus political advertisement in the context of this study are strategically placed information deliberately informing the populace or making public activities or personalities as well as political parties and ideologies in order

to get and use power by placing such information in the newspapers. The Punch, The Guardian, Vanguard and Daily Trust were purposively selected for the study investigating prominence of political advertisements featured before, during and after the elections; contents as the pictures, logos, texts, and languages majorly used in the political advertisements; and adversarial or the slants/directions of the March 28<sup>th</sup> Presidential and April 11<sup>th</sup> 2015 Assemblies Elections. Content categories include language, logo/icon/symbols, issue/personality/event/activity, visuals/pix, size, colour, political ideology among others. The study reveals that political adverts were prominent in the newspapers during the six-month period with the dominance of full page adverts, mostly inside-page adverts, aspirant-filled pictures, PDP-dominated and coloured adverts, largely favourable and friendly adverts with rational appeal going before testimony appeals. It further shows that Punch closely followed by Guardian had the highest adverts, while PDP and APC dominated the political landscape with low presence of adversarial contents. The study recommends more ethical monitoring of political adverts as well as the de-commodification of newspaper contents.

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**Keywords:** Content Analysis, Political Advertisements, National Dailies.

## **Introduction**

Newspaper (journalism) and politics have a long history of juxtaposition in Nigeria dating back to the first newspaper: “Iwe Iroyin fun Awon Ara Egba ati Yoruba” (Newspaper for the Egbas and Yoruba). The maiden issue of the newspaper “Iwe Iroyin fun Awon Omo Egba Ati Yoruba” was first seen on Abeokuta streets, churches, and schools on December 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1859 and had an existence of eight years (1859-1867) while the pioneer of the first African newspaper to publish in an African language, Reverend Henry Townsend stated his purpose as getting “the people to read and to beget the habit of seeking information by reading (Duyile, 1987; Daramola 2013). The newspaper which later became a weekly bilingual, had eight pages and published a wide range of news; birth, deaths, movement of religious ministries, parish news, baptismal and confirmation news, political news, especially those concerning Abeokuta and environ. Iwe iroyin also carried commercial news about produce prices for palm oil, and also included news about colonial administration, some foreign news, advertisements and public announcements in its editions” (Duyile, 1987:17). The paper began two separate editions in English and Yoruba in 1866 to confirm that the newspaper thrived well and was a force to be reckoned with during the time as it provided the early elites with literature, educated the growing public about history and politics of the time, and played advocacy role in fight

against slave trade. It was the fore-runner of the first Yoruba Bible in 1862, people came to employ the newspaper as the chief weapon by which they were to exercise their power of participation in the government of their land (Daramola 2006;13). Duyile (1987) and Daramola (2013) specifically noted that Reverend Henry Townsend used Iwe Iroyin to garner fame and influence for himself in the politics of the time. According to Duyile (1987: 16):

The prestige, influence and fame won by Reverend Townsend, though were achieved over a long period of time he spent crusading the gospels, other important factors such as the setting up the “Iwe Iroyin” in 1859 were largely responsible for his success.

In Daramola’s words

Iwe Iroyin was Townsend’s chief weapon in his ambitious political propaganda and shrewd maneuvering for power in Egbaland...Although Iwe Iroyin began more as a small, provincial newspaper, devoted to evangelism, community news and anti-slavery news, it exerted considerable influence in the political sphere. It mobilized pro-Egba sentiment in Yorubaland against the colonial government in Lagos. The paper’s political stance and capacity for agitation led to attempts by colonial administration to control it and muzzle succeeding newspapers...the Nigerian press, right from Iwe Iroyin, was founded as a nationalist, freedom-fighting press. It was founded to fight for democracy. This is responsible for the psyche, mentality and the *raison d’être* of the Nigerian press right from colonial days. Right from its early days, the press was in conflict with the colonial government and that has remained the relationship even indigenous government till today (2013: 15-16).

From this perspective, it becomes apparent that politics has been one of the main stays of the media (newspaper) industry in Nigeria and indeed the global community whether as news, features, opinions, advertisements and advertorials. Political fame came through journalistic efforts and or through newspaper (media) political advertisements and newspaper (media) ownership through political antecedent. Not much has changed from the days of Iwe Iroyin till now (156 years after) except refinements from the crude form to sophisticated and expensive copies with intermediaries like corporate agencies, researchers, media buyers or media

independents, computerized, digitalized and online copies among others. From the missionary press to the adversarial (The Lagos Times and Gold Coast Advertiser 1880-1883; The Lagos Observer 1882-1888 etc.) to the nationalistic press (The Weekly Record 1891-1930, The Lagos Standard 1893-1910 etc.) to the consolation press (West African Pilot 1937-1957, Gasikiya Tafi kwabo 1939-date ) to the post-independence newspapers, military /transition newspapers ,and current democratic newspapers, the same feature is common, politically dominated scope with different players and level of participation. Players like Reverend Henry Townsend, Herbert Macaulay, Dr. Nnamdi Azikwe, Chief Anthony Enahoro, Chief Obafemi Awolowo, and Chief Samuel Ladoke Akintola among others were prominent journalists, newspaper owners/ operators turned politicians and also utilized the platform to gain public status. From this humble beginning, newspaper and indeed media advertising has seemingly grown to become multibillion naira industry with myriad of professions and experts springing therefrom. If political advertisements have therefore become huge and important, what prominence is given to political advertisements in Nigerian newspapers before, during and after the 2015 elections? To what extent are the political advertisements in the national dailies about the 2015 elections filled with adversarial contents? What is the direction of the political advertisements in the national dailies about the 2015 elections?

### **Political Advertising**

Political advertising is a form of campaigning used by political candidates to reach and influence voters. Political advertising is a subset of advertising described by Arens (2008) as a structured and composed non-personal communication of information, usually paid for and usually persuasive in nature, about products, services and ideas by identified sponsors, through various mass media; and according to Kayode (2014:82) requires that mass communication be focused, targeted and managed when reaching out the large audience groups. It can include several different mediums and span several months over the course of a political campaign. Unlike the campaigns of the past, advances in media technology have streamlined the process, giving candidates more options to reach even larger groups of constituents with very little physical effort. Political advertising has been an age long phenomenon and it changed drastically in the 1952's with Dwight D Eisenhower who was the first candidate to extensively use television commercials in a presidential election. The Daisy Girl was an instance of negative political advertisement released by Lyndon Johnson's campaign during the 1964 election and it helped Johnson win the electoral votes of 44 states. Political attack adverts have become prevalent from 1970's and 1980's as tools used against political opponents. Political

advertisements have further received heavy boosts through cable television networks while the growth of the internet brought another tremendous growth in web-based advertising: “the 2008 elections was notable for Senator Barack Obama’s use of the internet to communicate directly and personally with supporters and constituents and this helped him win the elections” (Boundless.com). In politics, campaign advertising is the use of an advertising campaign through the media to influence political debate, and ultimately, voters. These adverts are designed by political consultants and political campaign staff (Wikipedia). Political advertising could be classified into three; positive adverts, (direct) comparative adverts, and negative or attacking adverts.

**Positive adverts:** also identified as competitive adverts, which include only statement about the candidate, with no explicit mention of the candidate’s opponent.

**Comparative adverts:(direct)**which contain both positive statements about the candidate and negative statements about the opponent, and

**Negative or attacking adverts:** which contain only negative statements about the opponent and nothing positive about the candidate (Goldstein and Freeman, 2002). Wrapping is another form of advertising also used for political purposes among others. Wrapping advertising or a vehicle wrap describe the marketing practice of completely or partially covering (wrapping a vehicle in an advertisement or livery). The result of this process is essentially a mobile billboard.Wrap advertising can be achieved by painting a vehicle’s outer surface, but an increasingly ubiquitous practice in the 21<sup>st</sup> century involves the use of large vinyl sheets as “decals”; buses, light rail carriages and automobile also serve as hosts for wrap advertising (Wrap Advertising, Wikipedia).Wrap is described as using “conformable vinyl wrapping” materials, a high-quality print or protective clear wrap can be molded to almost any and every part of a vehicle.Decals used to cover side and rear windows on a vehicle are typically perforated as see-through for passengers to look outside. This graphic technology originated in the 1980’s with first dominant patent registered by a British company called Contra Vision. Wrapped advertisements must often be divided into a number of smaller pieces to appropriately cover any movable panels on the vehicle, such as the fuel tank cover, trunk (boot) openings, and other doors (Wikipedia).

### **Political Parties and 2015 Elections**

A political party is a political organization that subscribes to a certain ideology and seeks to attain political power through representation in government. Going by this simple dictionary meaning, political parties are

organizations specifically formed with mandate to aspire, lobby and contend or contest for political power through electoral processes including party formation and registration, voters' registration and elections among others. Ideologies imply sets of beliefs or philosophies binding individuals and groups within the party together and forging a fusion among members. The 2015 elections were managed by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) with processes starting with a calendar or schedule set out by the electoral body. The ultimate was the nationwide elections scheduled originally for 14<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> February presidential/gubernatorial as well as parliament elections respectively but shifted forwards to March 28<sup>th</sup> and April 11<sup>th</sup>, 2015. The following is the list of registered political parties in Nigeria:

- Advanced Congress of Democrats (ACD)
- Alliance for Democracy (AD)
- All Progressives Congress (APC)
- African Democratic Congress (ADC)
- All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA)
- All People's Party (APP)
- African Renaissance Party [ARP]
- Conscience People's Congress [CPC]
- Communist Party of Nigeria (CPN)
- Citizens Popular Party(CPP)
- Democratic Alternative(DA)
- Democratic People's Party (Nigeria)(DPP)
- Democratic Socialist Movement(DSM)
- Fresh Democratic Party(FDP)
- Labour Party[LP]
- Masses Movement of Nigeria (MMN)
- National Conscience Party(NCP)
- New Democrats(ND)
- National Democratic Party(NDP)
- People's Democratic Party (PDP)
- Progressive Peoples Alliance (PPA)
- People Progressive Party(PPP)
- People's Redemption Party (PRP)
- People's Salvation Party(PSP)
- Action Alliance (AA)
- Social Democratic Mega Party(SDMP)
- Socialist Party of Nigeria(SPN)
- Social Democratic Party(SDP)
- United Nigeria People's Party (UNPP)
- United Progressive Party (UPP)

- **Mega People Political Party(MPPP)**  
(Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia).

Many of the political parties may not be as active while few are regional-centric and some actually possess the seeming character of a national organization. Two prominent political parties in the 2015 elections are discussed briefly below:

### **All Progressives Congress (APC)**

The **All Progressives Congress (APC)** is a political party in Nigeria, formed on 6 February 2013 in anticipation of the 2015 elections. APC candidate Muhammad Buhari won the presidential election by almost 2.6 million votes. Incumbent President Goodluck Jonathan conceded defeat on 31 March. This was the first time in Nigeria's political history that an opposition political party unseated a governing party in a general election and one in which power transferred peacefully from one political party to another. In addition, the APC won the majority of seats in the Senate and the House of Representatives in the 2015 elections, though it fell shy of winning a super-majority to override the ability of the opposition People's Democratic Party to block legislation.

### **People's Democratic Party(PDP)**

The **People's Democratic Party** is a political party in Nigeria. Its policies generally lie towards the Centre-right of the political spectrum. It won every Presidential election between 1999 and 2011, and was until the 2015 elections, the governing party in the Fourth Republic although in some cases, amid a few controversial electoral circumstances.

All the political parties participated in the 2015 elections using all available mass and non-mass media to orchestrate their activities as well as to sell their ideologies/manifestoes and candidates to the electorate, who had the ultimate power of choice through the ballot box. This paper is concerned with the use of national newspapers by all the political parties for purpose of selling their parties, ideologies as well as aspirants in order to make them voter's choice or preferred candidates during the elections. Specifically, the paper concentrates on the content analysis of political advertisements in Daily Trust, Guardian, Vanguard, and Punch newspapers.

### **Daily Trust newspaper**

The Nigerian Daily Trust newspaper is published alongside weekly Trust newspaper, as an innovative, versatile and market driven newspaper. Together, they constitute the largest circulating newspapers in northern Nigeria. Daily Trust was established in January 2001 and was the first daily newspaper from the Federal Capital Territory (Abuja). The Daily Trust

newspaper is printed and published by Media Trust Limited Abuja. The online site is well organized, simple, content rich and easy to navigate. The company first came out with the Weekly Trust on March 21, 1998 and the publisher is Alhaji Kabiru Yusuf, a senior lecturer of the Department of Political Science, Usman Dan Fodio University, Sokoto. The paper according to Daramola (2013:146-7) is more prominent in the Northern part of the country and pursues northern agenda. The Daily Trust and Weekly Trust became the largest circulating newspaper in Northern Nigeria as from year 2000 and are distributed in all towns and cities in the North; Lagos, Abeokuta and Ibadan in the southwest; Yenogoa, Benin, Calabar in the south-south; Onitsha, Owerri and Enugu in the south east; and in various outlets in London, England etc.

### **The Punch**

The Punch newspaper has certainly made a significant impact on the political and cultural scenes in Nigeria. It has consistently maintained its unwavering commitment to excellent journalism that is recognized both at home and overseas. It has won several awards, a few of which include the newspaper of the year award presented at the Diamond Award for Media Excellence in Lagos recently, and the best designed newspaper of the year award. The Punch is the most widely read Nigerian newspaper. The Punch newspaper was founded in 1971 by two friends, Sam Amuka, a columnist and editor at the Daily Times and James Aboderin, an accountant. However, Daramola (2013) says the Punch began as a Sunday publication on 18 March, 1973 while the daily edition began on November 1, 1976 and the publisher was Chief James Olubunmi Aboderin, an accountant with the National Bank. He however noted elsewhere that Sam Amuka collaborated with Chief Olu Aboderin to establish Punch newspaper in 1973 but the two friends parted ways in 1981 as a result of disagreement. The paper has won several awards as a reputable Nigerian newspaper.

### **Guardian**

The Guardian newspaper was established to disseminate balanced editorial information and coverage of other events. It is a liberal, independent Nigerian newspaper that is committed to promoting true democracy and individual freedom. It has demonstrated unwavering commitment to the citizens of Nigeria from the day of its inception till present. It is one of the few Nigerian newspapers that almost every Nigerian relies on, for quality news. According to Daramola (2013), the Guardian newspaper began as Sunday Guardian on February 27, 1983 calling itself the 'the flagship of Nigerian print media' while the daily edition began on July 4, 1983 published by Alex Uruemu Ibru.



## **Vanguard**

Nigerian Vanguard newspaper was established in 1983, but began paper production in 1984 with the objective to ‘serve in the vanguard of a better life for the people of Nigeria’. It was initially a Sunday newspaper, but commence daily production shortly afterwards. The publisher is Sam Amuka Pemu (aka Sad Sam), a former reporter with the Daily Times who is today regarded as the doyen of Nigerian journalists. Immediately after the inception, it gained popularity as a reputable newspaper and it now has distribution centers in practically all the state capitals. It brings a refreshingly different style to news coverage and also strives to maintain excellent service by utilizing the best media technologies.

## **Literature**

Udende (2011) examined the mass media, political awareness and voting behaviour in the Nigeria’s 2011 Presidential Election and documented that the level of political awareness among electorate in Nigeria seems very low; majority of voters lack basic knowledge about the entire political process to take reasoned decisions on election matters, and they follow their traditional voting pattern as they vote on the basis of religion and ethnic ties rather than on issues that are critical to human existence. Udende curiously raised some germane concerns about elections in the country: “elections in Nigeria have not convinced us that the electorates are completely informed. Apart from the 1993 June 12 presidential election which M.K.O Abiola was alleged to have won, all other elections, before and after, are not adjudged to be free and fair. While incumbency takes its toll on one hand, the electorates mortgage their franchise on the other. Of greatest concern is election rigging in all ramifications. While writing on political violence, Doghudje (1992: 91) avers that the 1991 primaries were violent prone. He supports this claim with the TSM magazine’s report of November 3, 1991 which had the following highlights: Acid bath at NRC Headquarters, shoot-out at SDP headquarters ... Nigerians have been subjected to an incredible replay of election rigging in certain states, on a scale and in a form most people had thought impossible in our national politics. The late President Umar Musa Yar’adua in his May 29, 2007 speech said “we have a lot of work to re-examine the electoral process so as to make future elections peaceful, credible and acceptable to the vast majority of our people. I consider this a major legacy I want to leave for Nigeria at the end of my presidency (Onah 2007:174)”. Results indicate that respondents have high knowledge of the contestants and their respective political parties, majority were exposed to political mass media messages and most were exposed to the messages on daily basis with more than half exposed to television messages. Close to half lacked basic knowledge of their contestants’ respective manifestoes. More than two thirds did not have

knowledge about the voting process ranging from registration, accreditation, thumb/finger printing to casting of votes .and more than two thirds of those who claim to know the process attributed it to both the media and interpersonal communication sources. About two-fifths were not sure political advertising reinforced their voting decision while close to half acknowledged the education of INEC staff on Election Day. Likewise very negligible number indicated they voted along religious and ethnic lines to show that this is a dying political culture in Nigeria and more than two-fifths voted based on charisma. Similarly, results of the effectiveness of mobile billboards 3M and The American Trucking Associations noted that 91% of the target demographic noticed the text and graphics on truck advertising, and the traffic Audit Bureau noted that on local routes monthly impressions ranged from one to four million hits. Product Acceptance and Research said 94% of respondents recalled seeing the mobile billboard, with 80% recalling the specific advertisement;the billboards resulted in a sales increase of 107%.The Advert Agency RYP and Becker Group completed the 3M mobile media advertising case study in 2011 with the following findings:97% of survey respondents recalled the advert,98% thought the advertising created positive image of the advertiser,and 96% thought fleet graphics had greater impact than billboards(Wikipedia, mobile desktop retrieved 24/9/15. <http://en.m.wikipedia.org/org/wrap-advertising>)

In a study of Nigerian electorates' perception of political advertising and election campaign, Olujide, Adeyemi and Gbadeyan (2011) examined the effectiveness of political advertising on Nigeria electorates and problems associated with negative political advertising. The study shows that political advertising has significant effect on the electorates who participate in community development and other civic responsibilities as electoral (voting) obligation, lobbying, personal contacts, political rallies and campaign, intra party and inter party contests. INEC's shoddy performance: poor planning, excluding electorates from voting,inadequate supply of voting materials and late arrival of electoral officers to polling station (Abdullahi 2008; Omodia 2009). Closely related to these, is Emman-Owums (2014) investigation of voter-perception of unique selling proposition of the two major presidential candidates in the March 2015 presidential elections in Nigeria between incumbent Goodluck Jonathan of the PDP and Muhammadu Buhari of the APC,based on their presented television commercials. The study found that voter disposition and behaviour are based on how presented political messages related to voter expectation; that the choice of unique selling proposition in political advertisements is not a major compelling force for candidate selection at election,implying that messages which contain no specific measurable item are weak in persuading positive patronage. Voters were able to distinguish between Jonathan's proposals and Buhari's

proposals; voters to a large extent related the candidates proposals to their own needs satisfaction; and no significant relationship existed between the presented proposals and voters propensity for candidate selection; respondents watched the political advertisements of both Goodluck Jonathan and Muhammadu Buhari on television. The study recommends the investigation of other elements stronger enough to motivate voter action as desired by political candidates if unique selling proposition is not strong enough motivator. In a study of media and youths' civic engagement during the 2015 Nigerian general election, Mustapha and Mustapha (2015) found the traditional media to be reinforcing democratic malaise and political apathy whereas the digital media technologies with democratizing features has reawakened citizens' civic interests. Findings of the study also support the notion that mass media in general, and the new media of late, are powerful political and democratic resources. It debunked the assertion that youth, due to their unbridled contact with digital media are shut out from the political realities of their external environment; besides their good use of the social media, the traditional media are still fundamental to the life of the youth and contribute to their political participation while also supporting the complimentary rather than substitution effect of new media on the traditional media.

### **Framing**

McQuail (2010:511) says framing is the way the news is framed by journalist and how the audience frames news activate certain inferences, ideas, judgments and contrast concerned issues, policies and politicians. Framing stems from agenda setting theory of the mass media and particularly relates that the treatment or frames (sociological, psychological, or philosophical) within which an issue is packaged or slanted may dictate what readers may likely perceive and how they may perceive such item from the media. This study is a content analysis with attention on political advertisements as well as implication for slants through language, pictures, and tone among others.

Framing as a concept, according to [masscommtheory.com/theory](http://masscommtheory.com/theory) is related to the agenda-setting theory but focuses on the essence of the issues rather than on a particular topic. Here the media focuses attention on certain events and places them within a field of meaning. Framing theory suggests that the way something is presented to the audience influences the choices people make about how to process that information. Frames are abstractions that work to organize or structure message meaning. The most common use of frames is in terms of the frame the news or media place on the information they convey. Framing is construed as a form of second level agenda setting that not only tell the audience what to think about (agenda setting theory),

but also how to think about that issue (second level agenda setting, framing theory). Goffman Erving first brought forth the theory as Framing Analysis in 1974 saying people interpret what is going on around their world through their primary framework because it is not dependent on other frameworks. The primary frameworks have two distinctions: the natural and the social; the natural is dependent on physical occurrences while the social is built on the natural with the view that events are socially driven occurrences, due to the whims, goals, and manipulations on the part of other social players (people). These frameworks according to Goffman, and the frames that they produce in communication greatly influence how data is interpreted, processed, and communicated. Framing implies that the media consciously as gate keepers organize and present ideas, events, and topics they cover. Framing is the way a communication source defines and constructs any piece of information. The framing of political advertisement thus, is consciously crafted gatekeeper's product organized and presented ideas, events, and topics to sway readers or audience in some perceived /preconceived ways.

### **Gate-keeping**

According to McQuail (2010) the term gatekeeping describes the process by which selections are made in media work especially decision on whether or not to allow a particular news report to pass through the gates of a news medium into the news channels. Gate keeping has a much wider potential application as it applies to the work of literary agents and publishers and to many kinds of editorial and production work in print and television. It also applies to decisions about distribution and making of existing media products like films. It refers to the power to give or withhold access to different voices in society. McQuail also noted a major tension in democratic societies between the foot (or politicians) and the media over the amount and kind of attention they receive in mass media. Another one is the kind of representations and amount of access given to minorities. According to Bittner (1989), Austrian psychologist Kurt Lewin was the first to employ the term Gatekeeper 'to refer to individuals or groups of persons who govern the travels of news items in the communication channel'. Bittner defines gatekeeper as any person or formally organized group directly involved in relaying or transferring information from one individual to another through a mass medium. This could be a reporter, a journalist, a film producer, a script writer, a film director, a network censor, a newspaper executive, or any individual in the processing or control of messages disseminated through mass media. The three major functions of gatekeepers are: (1) to limit the information we receive by editing this information before it is disseminated to us; (2) to expand the amount of information we receive by giving us additional facts or views and (3) to reorganize or reinterpret the information.

Gatekeeping in the context of political advertising implies decision on editorial versus advertising mix, size, placement and prominence given to copies as well as possible influence on perceptions by the audience. For instance, full front page positioning of political advertisement speaks volume of prominence and expected influence, and this position is further reinforced when such advertisement is adversarial. Whether implied or explicit, it means the piece is of more immense importance than any other piece of information in the medium.

## Method

Content analysis was adopted for the study, covering a six- month period before, during and after the 2015 general election in the country. Four national dailies were purposively selected for the study based on ownership, spread, and location while the study period includes November and December 2014 and January, February, March and April 2015. Each political advertisement in each of the newspapers for the period constitutes the unit of analysis making a total of 720 editions of the national dailies. Tone, language, visuals, pictures, month, day, week, size of adverts, colour, pagination, sponsor, appeal, political party, issue in focus and directions constitute the content categories for the study. A coding guide was developed and used while the coded values were subjected to simple percentage analysis after the frequency tallies.

## Results

**Research question 1:** What prominence is given to political advertisements in Nigerian Newspapers before, during and after the 2015 elections?

Table 1: Distribution of Papers Analyzed

	Frequency	Percent
Daily trust	78	8.6
Guardian	321	35.5
Vanguard	173	19.1
Punch	333	36.8
Total	905	100.0

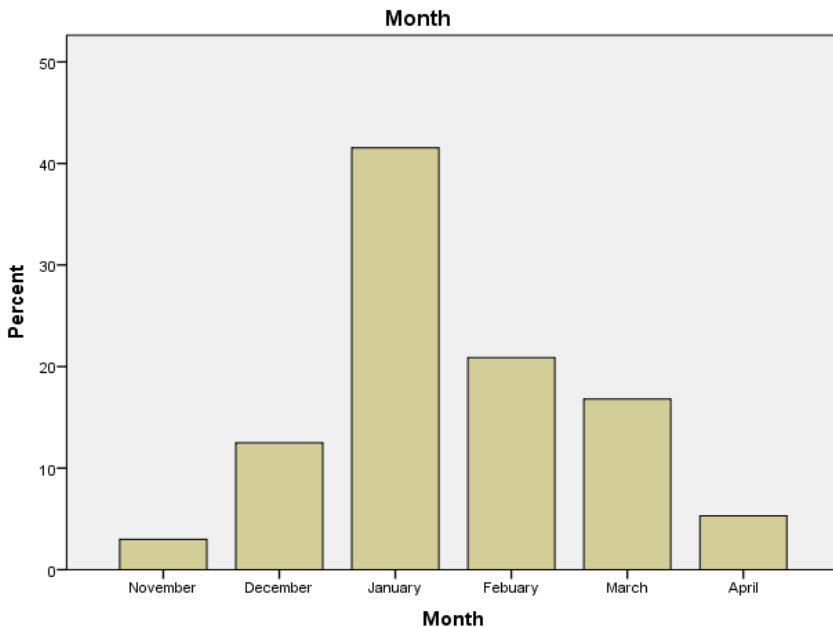
Table 1 shows that 905 political adverts were analyzed in the six-month period. Punch newspaper recorded the highest number of political adverts (36.8%) in the period under study, followed by the Guardian 35.5%, Vanguard 19.1% and Daily Trust 8.6%. On political parties, (Item 14 of the comprehensive table) shows that of the 905 total adverts analyzed during the six month period, 64.8% belonged to the People's Democratic Party (PDP) while All Progressive Congress (APC) had 30.6% adverts and all other

parties constitute 4.6%.The breakdown shows that PDP had 23.7% adverts in Guardian, 22.6% in Punch, 14.8% in Vanguard and 4% in Daily Trust. APC had 14.1% in Punch,9.1% in Guardian,4.2% in Daily Trust and 2.9% adverts in Vanguard for the study period .One may be tempted to aver that for PDP,Guardian is the most trusted paper to reach its teaming supporters while for APC,Punch seems its choice newspaper.

Table 2: Display of Newspaper Political Advertisements by Month

Newsp./Month	Vanguard	Guardian	Daily Trust	Punch	Total
November	12 (6.0%)	11 (3.4%)	-----	4(1.2%)	27(3%)
December	16 (9.2%)	18 (56%)	-----	11(3.3%)	45(5%)
January	28 (16.2%)	166(52%)	28(35.9%)	153(45.9%)	375(41.4%)
February	83 (48%)	69(21.4%)	30(25.6%)	76(22.8%)	258(28.5%)
March	11 (6.4%)	53(16.5%)	20(25.6%)	68(20.4%)	152(16.8%)
April	23 (13.3%)	4(1.2%)	-----	21(6.3%)	48(5.3%)
Total	173(100)	321(100%)	78(100)	333(100)	905(100)

Table 2 shows the distribution of the political adverts in the four selected newspapers across the six months period. It shows that 41.4% of the political adverts were displayed in January, that was to be the month preceding the initial scheduled date for presidential election which was later shifted forward by six weeks (from February 14<sup>th</sup> to March 28<sup>th</sup>); 28.5% in February, 16.8% in March, 5% in December (2014), 5.3% in April, the month after the presidential election and 3% in November (2014). The graph below illustrates the patterns of political advertisements in the period under study.



This chart shows that the election campaigns took off slowly in

November (2014),gathered momentum in December (2014),peaked in January slowed down in February, and began to thin out in March and fizzle off in April. It should however be noted that Daily Trust editions of November, December (2014) could not be accessed because the editions for the month have been returned to the North. There was no political advertisement in the April edition of the Daily Trust. The weekly distribution of political advertisements shows that close to one third, 28.2% of political advertisements featured on the fourth week,while about one fifths 20.3% and 20.1% featured in the third and the first weeks respectively, and close to one fifth, 19.4% were featured in the second week.Going by the days of the week,17.7% featured on Thursdays,17.4% on Mondays,16% on Wednesdays, 14.3% on Tuesdays,13.6% on Fridays, 12.9% on Sundays and 7.3% on Saturdays. The table below presents all the primary data of the study by variable and by newspaper.

S/N	ITEM	DAILY TRUST		GUARDIAN		VANGUARD		PUNCH		TOTAL	
<b>1</b>	<b>TONE</b>	<b>Freq.</b>	<b>%age</b>	<b>Freq.</b>	<b>%age</b>	<b>Freq.</b>	<b>%age</b>	<b>Freq.</b>	<b>%age</b>	<b>Freq.</b>	<b>%age</b>
	Harsh	22	2.4	90	10.0	45	5.0	80	8.8	237	26.1
	Subtle	37	4.1	87	9.6	34	3.8	86	9.5	224	27.0
	Friendly	19	2.1	144	15.9	94	9.3	167	18.5	424	46.9
	<b>Total</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>8.6</b>	<b>321</b>	<b>35.5</b>	<b>173</b>	<b>19.1</b>	<b>333</b>	<b>36.7</b>	<b>905</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>LANGUAGE</b>	<b>Freq.</b>	<b>%age</b>	<b>Freq.</b>	<b>%age</b>	<b>Freq.</b>	<b>%age</b>	<b>Freq.</b>	<b>%age</b>	<b>Freq.</b>	<b>%age</b>
	English	77	8.5	314	34.7	164	18.1	320	35.3	875	96.7
	Indigenous language	0	0.0	2	0.2	0	0.0	0	0.0	2	0.2
	Pidgin	1	0.1	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	0.1
	combination	0	0.0	5	0.6	9	1.0	13	1.4	27	3.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>8.6</b>	<b>321</b>	<b>35.5</b>	<b>173</b>	<b>19.1</b>	<b>333</b>	<b>36.7</b>	<b>905</b>	<b>100</b>	
<b>3</b>	<b>VISUAL</b>	<b>Freq.</b>	<b>%age</b>	<b>Freq.</b>	<b>%age</b>	<b>Freq.</b>	<b>%age</b>	<b>Freq.</b>	<b>%age</b>	<b>Freq.</b>	<b>%age</b>
	Logo	1	0.1	0	0.0	5	0.5	0	0.0	6	0.7
	Symbols	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	0.1	0	0.0	1	0.1
	Pictures	16	1.8	11	1.2	10	1.1	15	1.7	52	5.8
	Combination	8	0.9	2	0.2	2	0.2	3	0.3	15	1.7
	Word alone with logo	45	5.0	279	30.8	143	15.8	292	32.3	759	83.8
	Others	8	0.9	29	3.2	12	1.3	23	2.5	72	8.0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>8.7</b>	<b>321</b>	<b>35.4</b>	<b>173</b>	<b>19.1</b>	<b>333</b>	<b>36.7</b>	<b>905</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>SIZE OF ADVERTS</b>	<b>Freq.</b>	<b>%age</b>	<b>Freq.</b>	<b>%age</b>	<b>Freq.</b>	<b>%age</b>	<b>Freq.</b>	<b>%age</b>	<b>Freq.</b>	<b>%age</b>
	1cm to ¼ cm page	53	5.7	26	2.9	6	0.6	1	0.1	86	9.5
	¼ cm to ½ cm page	0	0.0	5	0.5	3	0.3	2	0.2	10	1.1
	½ cm to ¾ cm page	0	0.0	2	0.2	7	0.8	5	0.5	14	1.5
	¾ cm to full page	23	2.5	260	28.8	154	17.0	311	34.3	748	82.6
	2 pages	2	0.2	28	3.1	3	0.3	14	1.5	47	5.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>8.6</b>	<b>321</b>	<b>35.5</b>	<b>173</b>	<b>19.1</b>	<b>333</b>	<b>36.7</b>	<b>905</b>	<b>100</b>	
<b>5</b>	<b>COLOUR</b>	<b>Freq.</b>	<b>%age</b>	<b>Freq.</b>	<b>%age</b>	<b>Freq.</b>	<b>%age</b>	<b>Freq.</b>	<b>%age</b>	<b>Freq.</b>	<b>%age</b>
	Coloured	76	8.4	299	33.0	170	18.8	327	36.1	871	96.3
	Black/White	2	0.2	22	2.4	3	0.3	6	0.7	33	3.7



<b>Total</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>8.6</b>	<b>321</b>	<b>35.4</b>	<b>173</b>	<b>19.1</b>	<b>333</b>	<b>36.8</b>	<b>905</b>	<b>100</b>	
<b>6</b>	<b>PAGINATION</b>	<b>Freq.</b>	<b>%age</b>	<b>Freq.</b>	<b>%age</b>	<b>Freq.</b>	<b>%age</b>	<b>Freq.</b>	<b>%age</b>	<b>Freq.</b>	<b>%age</b>
	Front page	0	0.0	17	1.9	1	0.1	33	3.6	51	5.6
	Inside page	75	8.3	206	22.8	113	12.5	283	31.3	677	74.8
	Back page	0	0.0	8	0.9	0	0.0	0	0.0	8	0.9
	Inside front page	1	0.1	18	2.0	27	3.0	1	0.1	47	5.2
	Centre spread	2	0.2	18	2.0	14	1.5	14	1.5	48	5.3
	Inside back page	0	0.0	54	6.0	18	2.0	2	0.2	74	8.2
	<b>Total</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>8.6</b>	<b>321</b>	<b>35.5</b>	<b>173</b>	<b>19.1</b>	<b>333</b>	<b>36.8</b>	<b>905</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>SPONSORS</b>	<b>Freq.</b>	<b>%age</b>	<b>Freq.</b>	<b>%age</b>	<b>Freq.</b>	<b>%age</b>	<b>Freq.</b>	<b>%age</b>	<b>Freq.</b>	<b>%age</b>
	Individual	19	2.1	21	2.3	34	3.8	35	3.9	109	12.0
	Party	31	3.4	67	7.4	76	8.4	131	14.5	305	33.7
	Groups	14	1.5	172	19.0	38	4.2	122	13.5	346	38.2
	Corporate	11	1.2	9	1.0	17	1.9	15	1.7	52	5.7
	Government	0	0.0	1	0.1	0	0.0	6	0.7	7	0.8
	Unknown	3	0.3	51	5.6	8	0.9	24	2.7	86	9.5
	<b>Total</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>8.6</b>	<b>321</b>	<b>35.5</b>	<b>173</b>	<b>19.1</b>	<b>333</b>	<b>36.8</b>	<b>905</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>8</b>	<b>APPEAL</b>	<b>Freq.</b>	<b>%age</b>	<b>Freq.</b>	<b>%age</b>	<b>Freq.</b>	<b>%age</b>	<b>Freq.</b>	<b>%age</b>	<b>Freq.</b>	<b>%age</b>
	Emotional	8	0.9	48	5.3	25	2.8	75	8.3	156	17.2
	Humour	3	0.3	22	2.4	4	0.4	28	3.1	57	6.3
	Testimony	14	1.5	130	14.4	39	4.3	92	10.2	275	30.4
	Rational	53	5.9	119	13.2	105	11.6	137	15.2	414	45.7
	Others	0	0.0	2	0.2	0	0.0	1	0.1	3	0.3
	<b>Total</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>8.6</b>	<b>321</b>	<b>35.5</b>	<b>173</b>	<b>19.1</b>	<b>333</b>	<b>36.8</b>	<b>905</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>9</b>	<b>TARGET AUDIENCE</b>	<b>Freq.</b>	<b>%age</b>	<b>Freq.</b>	<b>%age</b>	<b>Freq.</b>	<b>%age</b>	<b>Freq.</b>	<b>%age</b>	<b>Freq.</b>	<b>%age</b>
	Indigenes	14	1.5	159	17.6	39	4.3	71	7.8	283	31.3
	Female Adult	0	0.0	4	0.4	1	0.1	4	0.4	9	1.0

	Residents	9	1.0	110	12.2	96	10.6	154	17.0	369	40.8
	Grassroots	11	1.2	2	0.2	8	0.9	7	0.8	28	3.1
	Elite	3	0.3	42	4.6	3	0.3	44	4.9	92	10.2
	Others	41	4.5	4	0.4	26	2.9	53	5.9	124	13.7
	<b>Total</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>8.6</b>	<b>321</b>	<b>35.5</b>	<b>173</b>	<b>19.1</b>	<b>333</b>	<b>36.8</b>	<b>905</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>10</b>	<b>PICTURES</b>	<b>Freq.</b>	<b>%age</b>	<b>Freq.</b>	<b>%age</b>	<b>Freq.</b>	<b>%age</b>	<b>Freq.</b>	<b>%age</b>	<b>Freq.</b>	<b>%age</b>
	Aspirant	49	5.4	214	23.6	141	15.6	245	27.0	649	71.7
	Animated cartoon	3	0.3	33	3.8	15	1.7	19	2.0	70	7.7
	Common man	9	10.3	7	0.8	0	0.0	25	2.8	41	4.5
	Aspirant and crowd	5	5.7	19	2.2	10	1.1	8	0.9	42	4.6
	Campaign rallies	6	6.9	9	1.0	3	0.3	8	0.9	26	2.9
	Houses/Estate/Landscape	1	0.1	1	0.1	4	0.4	5	0.6	11	1.2
	Buses/Cabs (Transport)	2	0.2	4	0.4	0	0.0	1	0.1	7	0.8
	Energy/Electricity/Gas/Petrol	3	0.3	1	0.1	0	0.0	1	0.1	5	0.6
	Infrastructure	0	0.0	10	1.1	0	0.0	4	0.4	14	1.5
	Others	0	0.0	23	2.6	0	0.0	17	1.9	40	4.4
	<b>Total</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>8.6</b>	<b>321</b>	<b>35.5</b>	<b>173</b>	<b>19.1</b>	<b>333</b>	<b>36.8</b>	<b>905</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>11</b>	<b>FOCUS OF ADVERT ISSUES ADDRESSED IN ADVERT</b>	<b>Freq.</b>	<b>%age</b>	<b>Freq.</b>	<b>%age</b>	<b>Freq.</b>	<b>%age</b>	<b>Freq.</b>	<b>%age</b>	<b>Freq.</b>	<b>%age</b>
	Electricity	7	0.8	9	10.0	2	0.2	3	0.3	21	2.3
	Houses	0	0.0	1	0.1	1	0.1	1	0.1	3	0.3
	Infrastructure	5	0.6	37	4.2	5	0.6	45	5.1	92	10.2
	Welfare	17	1.9	30	3.4	41	4.7	64	7.3	152	16.8
	Security	17	1.9	20	2.3	0	0.0	10	1.1	47	5.2
	Past achievement	22	2.4	137	15.1	20	2.3	81	9.0	260	28.7
	Change	4	0.4	42	4.6	42	4.8	85	9.3	173	19.1
	Economy	6	0.7	14	1.6	62	7.1	26	3.0	108	12.0
	Others	0	0.0	31	3.4	0	0.0	18	2.0	49	5.4
	<b>Total</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>8.6</b>	<b>321</b>	<b>35.5</b>	<b>173</b>	<b>19.7</b>	<b>333</b>	<b>36.8</b>	<b>905</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>12</b>	<b>DIRECTIONS</b>	<b>Freq.</b>	<b>%age</b>	<b>Freq.</b>	<b>%age</b>	<b>Freq.</b>	<b>%age</b>	<b>Freq.</b>	<b>%age</b>	<b>Freq.</b>	<b>%age</b>
	Favourable	37	4.1	200	22.0	140	15.5	199	21.9	576	63.6

Neutral	24	2.6	14	1.6	27	2.9	43	4.8	108	11.9	
Unfavourable	17	1.9	107	11.9	6	0.7	91	10.0	221	24.4	
<b>Total</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>8.7</b>	<b>321</b>	<b>35.4</b>	<b>173</b>	<b>19.1</b>	<b>333</b>	<b>36.7</b>	<b>905</b>	<b>100</b>	
<b>13</b>	<b>IDEOLOGY</b>	<b>Freq.</b>	<b>%age</b>	<b>Freq.</b>	<b>%age</b>	<b>Freq.</b>	<b>%age</b>	<b>Freq.</b>	<b>%age</b>	<b>Freq.</b>	<b>%age</b>
	Capitalism	0	0.0	4	0.4	6	0.7	9	1.0	19	2.1
	Communism	2	0.2	0	0.0	2	0.2	6	0.7	10	1.1
	Common-man focused	17	1.9	77	8.5	11	1.2	59	6.5	164	18.1
	Others	11	1.2	65	7.2	25	2.8	66	7.3	167	18.5
	Welfarism	31	3.4	59	6.5	24	2.7	86	9.5	200	22.1
	Common interest	17	1.9	116	12.8	105	11.6	107	12.0	345	38.1
	<b>Total</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>8.6</b>	<b>321</b>	<b>35.5</b>	<b>173</b>	<b>19.1</b>	<b>333</b>	<b>36.8</b>	<b>905</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>14</b>	<b>POLITICAL PARTIES</b>	<b>Freq.</b>	<b>%age</b>	<b>Freq.</b>	<b>%age</b>	<b>Freq.</b>	<b>%age</b>	<b>Freq.</b>	<b>%age</b>	<b>Freq.</b>	<b>%age</b>
	APC	38	4.2	82	9.1	28	3.0	129	14.3	277	30.6
	PDP	36	4.0	213	23.7	133	14.8	204	22.5	586	64.8
	Others	4	0.4	26	2.9	12	1.3	0	0.0	42	4.6
	<b>Total</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>8.7</b>	<b>321</b>	<b>35.7</b>	<b>173</b>	<b>19.0</b>	<b>333</b>	<b>36.7</b>	<b>905</b>	<b>100</b>

Item 4 reflects the size of newspaper adverts showing that most (82.6%) political adverts are between three quarter of a page and full page, followed by 9.5% of between 1cm and one quarter of a page, 5.1% for 2 pages of political adverts while 1.5% and 1.1% respectively represented other smaller sizes. Going by the breakdown of this variable (size), prominence would reveal that out of the 180 days (6 months) period of the research or newspaper display of political advertisements, the Guardian newspaper had 260 inserts of greater than  $\frac{3}{4}$  to full page inserts of political adverts meaning that there were about 1.4 political adverts displays in each of the 180 days (more than one advert every day). If we go by table 3 where Guardian displayed most of its political adverts prominently in January (52%) and February (1.4%), it means most of  $> \frac{3}{4}$  to full page political adverts were displayed prominently in January and February 2015. There were also 28 displays of 2 page political adverts and 26 displays of 1cm to  $\frac{1}{2}$  page political advert during the 180 period in the Guardian newspaper. The Punch newspaper also had a display of 310 greater than  $\frac{3}{4}$  to full page political adverts in the 6 months (180 days) period, meaning that there were 1.7 daily displays or about 2 daily displays of full page political adverts. If we also pay attention to the fact that close to half (45.9%) occurred in January, followed by 22.8% in February and 20.4% in March, it means most of the displays occurred in January, then February and March. It simply implies that Punch had large dose of political adverts in January, which may actually choke readers. This may not but be this way if one consider that Punch claims to be the most widely read newspaper in Nigeria. In similar vein, Vanguard featured 154 displays of  $> \frac{3}{4}$  to full page political adverts in the 180 days research period, 0.9 displays per day.

Using item 6 on the analysis table we continue the prominence exploration turning attention to pagination of the political advertisements in the four newspapers. Most of the political adverts (74.8%) were displayed on the inside pages of the dailies (or other pages of the newspaper) while 8.2% were displayed on inside back pages, 5.6% on front pages, 5.3% on the center spread, 5.2% on the inside front page and 0.9% on back page; the break down shows that the Daily Trust did not display any political advert on its front page during the study period, Vanguard had one display, Guardian had 17 displays while Punch had 33 displays. The bulk of 5.6% front page displays were actually by Punch, followed by Guardian. Only the Guardian had 8 displays of political advert on the back page, the three other newspapers did not have any. For the inside front page, Vanguard had 27 displays and Guardian had 18 displays while Punch and Daily Trust had one display each for the inside back page, Guardian had 54 displays, Vanguard had 18 displays, Punch had 2 displays while Daily Trust did not have any. For

the center spread, Guardian had 18 displays, Vanguard and Punch had 14 displays each, while Daily Trust had 2 displays. For the inside or other pages, Punch had 283 displays. Punch had the most prominent display of political adverts in the research period with 33 front page displays, 14 center spread display and 2 inside back and one inside front-page displays and 283 other inside page displays. Guardian followed this prominence with 17 front-page displays, 8 back page displays, 18 center spread displays, 54 inside back page and 18 inside front page displays, as well as 206 other inside page displays.

Vanguard featured one front page displays, 27 inside front page and 18 inside page, 14 center spread display and 113 other inside page displays. The four papers gave prominence to political advertisements during the six months research period in this order; Punch, Guardian, Vanguard and Daily Trust, yet it must be noted that the adverts majorly displayed the two prominent political parties: Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and All Progressive Congress (APC).

**RESEARCH QUESTION 2:** To what extent are political advertisements of the 2015 elections in the newspapers filled with adversarial contents?

Item 2 on the analysis table is on the language employed in the political adverts and it shows that most (96.7%) of the political adverts were written in English language, 2.4% in combined languages, 0.2% in indigenous language and 0.7% in Pidgin English. The break down shows that the 0.2% (or observed 2 displays) of indigenous language political adverts were found in the Guardian, there were five adverts in pidgin English in Guardian and one in Daily Trust; while Punch had 13 adverts in combined languages and Vanguard had 9 adverts in combined languages.

Item 1 on Toneshows tone of the adverts to include 46.9% of friendly tone, 27% of subtle tone and 26.2% of harsh tone. The breakdown shows that Punch had 18.5% of friendly toned adverts, Guardian had 15.9%, Vanguard had 9.3% and Daily Trust had 2.1%. For subtle tone, Guardian had 9.6%, Punch had 9.5%, and Daily Trust had 4.1% while Vanguard had 3.8%. For the harsh tone, Guardian had 10%, Punch had 8.7%, Vanguard had 5% and Daily Trust had 2.4%.

Item 3 is on Visuals and shows that most (83.9%) of the political advert visuals appeared as words alone with logo, 5.7% came as pictures, 1.7% came as combination of logo, symbols, pictures, and words, 0.7% and 0.1% came as logo and symbols respectively, while 8% appeared as other unclassified visuals.

Item 5 is on Colour and shows that 96.4% of the political adverts were in color, while 3.6% were black and white. This adds to the prominence of the political adverts for the research period. The 33 (or 3.6%) Black and White adverts had 22 displays in Guardian, 6 displays in Punch, 3 displays in

Vanguard and 2 displays in Daily Trust.

Item 8 shows the Appeal of the political adverts; 45.7% Rationale appeals, 30.4% came as Testimony, 17.2% as Emotional appeal, 6.3% as Humor appeal and 0.3% for others. Item 10 shows analysis of the pictures in the political adverts; they include 71.7% aspirant pictures, 7.7% animation or cartoon, 4.6% aspirant and crowd, and 4.5% common man among others. Item 11 shows the focus or issues addressed in the political adverts; 28.7% of the adverts focus on past achievement; 19.1% on change, 16.8% on welfare, 11.9% on economy, 10.2% on infrastructure, 5.4% Others, 5.2% on security, 2.3% on electricity and 0.3% houses. Breakdown reveals that Past achievement (2.4%), followed by Security (1.9%) and Welfare (1.9%) constitute the largest categories of the political adverts in Daily Trust; and in Guardian, it is Past achievement (15%), Electricity (10%) and Change (4.6%); Vanguard focuses more on Economy (7.1%), Change (4.8%) and Welfare (4.7%); while the major focus of political adverts in Punch include Change (9.3%), Past achievement (9%), Welfare (7.3%) and Infrastructure (5.1%). Item 7 shows the distribution of Sponsors of the political adverts; 38.2% were sponsored by Groups, 33.7% by Political parties, 12% Individuals, 9.5% Unknown /Unindicated sources, 5.7% by Corporate bodies and 0.8% by Government. Breakdown shows that groups are the largest (19%) sponsors of political advertisement in the Guardian, followed by political parties (14.5%) and groups (13.5%) in the Punch. In the Vanguard, political parties (8.4%) and groups (4.2%) are the largest sponsors, while in the Daily Trust, political parties (3.4%) and individuals (2.1%) were the highest sponsors of political advertisements. On the whole, Groups, Political parties and Individuals were the largest sponsors of political adverts of the 2015 presidential elections.

Item 12 shows the direction of the political adverts in the national dailies. On the whole, 63% of the adverts were favorable, 24.4% were unfavorable, while 11.9% were neutral. The breakdown shows that Punch (22%) closely followed by Guardian (21.9%) have the largest favorable political adverts; while Vanguard (0.7%) has the least unfavorable political advert, followed by Daily Trust (1.9%), Punch (9.9%) and Guardian (11.9%) as the one with highest number of unfavorable political adverts. This implies that Guardian followed by Punch had the highest unfavourable adverts and the two papers also had the highest number of favourable political adverts.

### **Discussion and conclusion**

The study of political advertisements about 2015 elections in selected national dailies reveals that the adverts were more prominent just before the election and during the election. They started featuring gradually before the election in November and December 2014, peaked in January, followed by

February and began to wane in March and actually began to disappear by April 2015. For instance, Daily Trust did not feature any political advert of the 2015 election in its April editions. The front page displays (5.6%) of the political adverts further confirm this prominence position while the fact that almost all the adverts appeared in full colour also support this. This may also lend credence to the news commodification allegation against media operators, the fact that they featured on front pages that are usually reserved for the juiciest story to sell the dailies is a pointer to this. Also, large majority of the adverts appeared in English Language, the nation's lingua franca and as full page adverts. The adversarial contents, though not prominent, are present as negative or unfavourable adverts, harsh tone adverts, among others. The adversarial contents call to question the ethical consideration in news operations as well as the self-regulating, self-righting process canvassed by the Social Responsibility Theory. However, one should not forget the fact that competitions as well as consideration of what others in the same business are doing are major factors determining the gatekeeping mechanism in the media operations. The study concludes that newspaper operators would most likely feature political adverts prominently during elections and serve the adversarial interests of media buyers to some extent. The foregoing supports Udousoro and Batta (2015) findings that political advertising for the 2015 Nigerian general elections when they were dealing with non-issues were mainly about harmless, laudatory/celebratory messages or scathing personal attacks with minimal rate of religious/ethnic/sectional sentiments as well as violent and hate messages. Despite large newspaper displays of political advertisements, Ojekwe's study of Akinwunmi Ambode's 2015 election advert campaigns in Lagos State (political advert campaigns and voting behaviour) suggested that political advert campaigns have minimal effect on electorate's voting behaviour, though it plays a role in the electoral process. Compared to other media, only 33.9% were exposed to newspaper adverts while only 7.4% respondents chose newspapers as adverts which they always remember. This minimal effect or subliminal effect is buttressed by the adversarial advert displays in the newspapers. For instance, the 26.2% of Harsh Toned adverts should have reduced the winsome spree of the APC presidential candidate, Muhammadu Buhari in the 2015 election, while majority of the 24.4% Unfavourable adverts may likely have been directed at this same candidate, yet with minimal impact to buttress Ojekwe's view that "irrespective of whether political candidates advertise or not, the electorates have a preconceived choice of candidate and exposure to advert campaigns of other contestants does little in changing preconceived choice". Ojekwe opined that respondents' conviction could most likely be as a result of party affiliation, word of mouth, strong opinion leader, simple personal appeal or other unknown factors. The prominence of

the political adverts in the national dailies shows huge investment into media confirming Alawode and Sunday's (2013) finding that the media are very powerful and served to enhance the economic development of the nation. The fact that indigenous languages are minimally utilized in the political adverts also conforms to findings of Alawode and Sunday that indigenous Nigerian languages are often introduced into film plots such that stories of the nation, the cultures of its people and diverse potentials available in the nation are portrayed.

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