POLITICAL PROPAGANDA ADVERTISEMENT ON THE ELECTORATES: EXAMINING THE EFFECT OF CAMPAIGN STRATEGIES IN GHANA

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Abstract
This study focuses mainly on the review of literature regarding political parties and their strategies using visual design elements in political propaganda advertisements which has been in practice for many decades. Research has shown that visual design elements have a significant impact on people's perception and behaviour. Political advertisements use visual design elements to create a lasting impression on the electorates' minds. Political parties employ various graphic art products, such as posters, billboards, and flyers, with text and images as powerful visual communication tools to shape the opinions and decisions of the various types of electorates during election campaigns. While political advertising is widespread in modern elections, there exists a notable knowledge gap regarding the precise extent and ways through which these advertisements influence voter behaviour. Advertisementsual design elements in political advertisements are a critical aspect of modern political campaigns. The visual design elements are used to attract attention, convey messages, and influence the electorates' decision-making process. The study aims to contribute to the existing body of knowledge on political propaganda and inform political campaigns' strategies. This study also aims to fill a knowledge gap by investigating the extent and ways through which these political advertising influences voter's behaviour. This study seeks to explore the effects of visual design elements such as billboards, posters, and flyers in political propaganda advertisements on the electorates' decision-making process. The outcome and discussions of this study would have implications for political parties and advertisers seeking to effectively influence the electorates' decision-making in Ghana-Kumasi.

Keywords: politics, electorates, advertisement, propaganda, party

INTRODUCTION

In modern political campaigns, visual design elements have become a critical component of propaganda advertisements. Political advertisements are aimed at influencing public opinion and persuading people to vote for a particular candidate or party. These advertisements employ different visual design elements such as billboards, posters, and flyers to attract attention, convey messages, and influence the electorates' decision-making. This study seeks to explore the effects of the use of visual design elements in political propaganda advertisements on the electorates' decision-making process.

The use of visual design elements in political propaganda advertisements has been in practice for many decades. Political propaganda has been defined as "the use of various media to shape public opinion, influence perceptions, and manipulate social attitudes to achieve a desired outcome" (Riley & Riley, 2015). Visual design elements such as colors, images, typography, and layout are used to attract the audience's attention, convey the intended message, and elicit emotions that influence their decision-making process.

Research has shown that visual design elements have a significant impact on people's perception and behaviour. For example, studies have shown that colour influences people's emotions and attitudes towards a particular brand or product (Labrecque & Milne, 2012). Similarly, typography has been found to affect people's reading speed, comprehension, and retention (Keller & Staelin, 1987).

Political advertisements use visual design elements to create a lasting impression on the electorates' minds. Billboards, posters, and flyers are popular mediums used in political campaigns to reach a broader audience. Billboards are often placed along highways and busy streets, while posters and flyers are distributed in public places such as markets, train stations, and bus stops. Research has shown that visual design elements in political advertisements can influence the electorates' decision-making process. For example, a study by Bucy and Bradley (2004) found that voters who were exposed to campaign ads with high levels of visual stimulation were more likely to remember the candidate's name and were more likely to vote for the candidate.

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This study aims to explore the roles of text and images in shaping voter decisions, and examine whether compelling imagery or persuasive text has a greater impact on their choices. This study seeks to provide insights into the complex relationship between political communication and voter decision-making across diverse electorates. The objectives of this study focus on the visual components of political advertisements, such as imagery, text and design. It seeks to understand the extent to which visual elements impact different types of electorates and whether compelling visuals have a more pronounced effect on voter behavior.

The study explores the various factors that contribute to voter decision-making in response to political advertising. Investigate variables such as prior political knowledge, emotional appeals, and the perceived authenticity of campaign materials. Assess how these factors interact with demographic characteristics to shape voting intentions and choices among various types of electorates. The study also explores the level of trust and credibility that different types of electorates place in political advertisements. It involves examining

whether voters believe in the content they encounter, whether they find it persuasive, and how their trust or belief affects their decision-making process during elections. The geographical scope of the study was to be focused on Ghana as a whole but due to having less period, this study will be limited to KNUST to enhance the successful completion of this study. Contextually, the study is to determine how political advertisement influences electorates' choices.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The study critically reviews work previously done by others. In this chapter we will look at propaganda, the types of propaganda techniques, persuasion, political advertising, political campaign and last the voting behavior of electorates including propaganda.

Electoral propaganda is similar to advertising propaganda in that its goal is to make an impression on the audience to get their vote in a particular campaign. That is, "in essence, political propaganda is no different from advertising; the latter concept assumes that something must be made known, advertised, or propagated to stimulate demand for goods and services" (Corona, 2011). Electoral propaganda aims to raise awareness of a particular candidate or, in the case of a newly formed political party, to position itself. Its goal is not to simply inform through data or proposals, but to persuade through emotions. (Corona, 2011) Political propaganda aimed at the general public aims to influence people through emotional effects rather than rational arguments.

Maintaining power in most governments around the world has become synonymous with political propaganda. (Afful, 2017). According to (Berelson, Bernard, & Janowitz, 1966), Political propaganda is defined as "political activity aimed at influencing the consciousness and mood of the general public through the propagation of ideas and slogans." It also uses radio, press, speech, posters, leaflets, cartoons, and other media as an instrument of class or party struggle. Following World War II, Soviet citizens participated in political campaigning as members, acting as middlemen between the general public and party leaders as state-sponsored communicators, to strengthen and consolidate internal structures "while employing all tactics to weaken western democracies." (Berelson, Bernard, & Janowitz, 1966).

The term "propaganda" has its roots in 1622, when Pope Gregory XV established a Committee of Cardinals to supervise missionary operations and over time, viewpoints from political science, history, psychology, and sociology have been incorporated into the study of propaganda. World War I was a turning point and served as a model for the evil tactics utilized by Nazi Germany. (Marlin, 2002). According to (Bernays, 2005) propaganda is a systematic, ongoing attempt to generate or mold events to affect how the public feels about a company, idea, or organization. It can also be a tool for social control or a byproduct of a social movement. (Lasswell, 1935).

Propaganda has traditionally been defined as the employment of convincing information to persuade a target audience to act in a way that the propagandist wants them to (Jowett & O'Donell, 2015). According to Black's Law Dictionary, propaganda is a communication intended to persuade a particular audience to adopt the viewpoint of the one

who is disseminating it. A definition of the term "propaganda" has been a source of debate for many academics. According to (Jacques, 1965) in modern societies, propaganda as a tactic (particularly psychological manipulation) "has certain similar outcomes," whether it is employed by communists, Nazis, or Western democratic organizations.

Political propaganda nowadays can be defined as "falsehoods [that] take many forms, from changing the history taught in schools to preventing the media from reporting on policy failures to relatively innocuous spinning of the economy's performance at press conferences," according to this definition (Little, 2016). Although acknowledging propaganda as the "executive arm of the invisible government's" power and control mechanisms does little to change the tactics of the propagandist, it at least gives comfort and hope in the knowledge that even the most cunning plans cannot penetrate an unwilling person's innermost thoughts (McClung Lee, 1945).

In order to identify the tactics employed by the propagandist to shape public opinion, academics frequently refer to (Lee & Lee, 1939) propaganda techniques while analyzing propaganda. After the September 11, 2001 attacks, Allen used these strategies to draw attention to the usage of religious rhetoric in President George W. Bush's speeches (Allen, 2002). Since the Institute for Propaganda Analysis (IPA) was founded, name-calling, glittering generalizations, card-stacking, and other conventional propaganda techniques have become synonymous with propaganda analysis (Sproule, 1997). The ultimate purpose of the organization was to empower and inspire people to identify propaganda, inspiring them to stop falling for its tricks (Institute for Propaganda Analysis, 1938).

These designations have significant ramifications for disarming the adversary and serve as a troubling warning to anybody who might cross their path. By associating the location with derogatory terms, the Name Calling approach can appeal to audiences' emotional prejudices by making them feel sorry for the residents or by portraying the location as an "unsafe destination," which might frighten spectators.

The IPA claims that the glittering generalities approach makes use of the feelings that consumers have already grown to associate with words of virtue. Using this technique, a propagandist hopes to influence the consumer's acceptance and approval before they consider the product being advertised. A dazzling generality is anything that is associated with a virtue and is used to persuade others to embrace a concept without considering the evidence (Lee & Lee, 1939). Name Calling in reverse uses terms that we all agree with or hold dear as a sparkling generalization. When we refer to a country as democratic, for instance, we frequently laud it since the word "democracy" typically has a worldwide meaning. In addition to serving as a means of legitimizing opposing parties' positions on the matter and persuading people to form favorable feelings and judgments in support of their rivals purported "legal rights," these virtue words typically have positive connotations for people because they are associated with something they value. Also utilized to help the audience remember glittering generalities is the shape of various symbols or catchphrases.

It can be used to discuss any undesirable individual or connotation (Teninbaum, 2009). It is an appeal to the individual to join in since so many other people are doing it. The core idea of Bandwagon is that everyone works toward the same goal. This strategy tries to

convince us that everyone in a group must work together because they all have the same idea (Lee & Lee, 1939). (Ellul, 1973) underlines the importance of joining the mob and jumping on the bandwagon while discussing propaganda by saying that "everything is in the grasp of evil." There is a solution. But only if everyone takes part, "and" you have to take part. Everything will be lost if you don't, and it's your fault.

The method through which a propagandist tries to convince others that their beliefs are good because they are "of the people" is referred to as "plain folks" (Lee & Lee, 1939). By focusing on the desires and sentiments of regular people, propagandists hope to imply that a politician is engaging in everyday activities on behalf of the common people. such as going to a church or worshiping in a mosque alongside regular people, going for a run, or spending time with their children. The tactic is used when a person sees themselves as belonging to the lower classes rather than the elite. The Plain Folks strategy uses everyday language and pictures to establish a sense of confidence in the target audience by appealing to people's urge to feel safe or comfortable.

According to Lee and Lee (1939), transfer is utilized to connect the standing and influence of one object to another, enhancing the value of the latter. (p. 69). In order to gain our approval or empathy, propagandists frequently appeal to the superiority and strength of things we value. By employing this method, an effort is made to impart the reputation of a certain sign to a person or a concept in order to make it more accepted.

One of the seven devices the Institute for Propaganda Analysis discovered is card stacking (IPA). Card stacking is the process by which a propagandist chooses and uses both truths and lies, uncertainties, and rational and illogical descriptions to highlight the best or worst features of a concept, person, program, or artifact (Lee & Lee, 1939). Politicians frequently only highlight the negative aspects of their rivals and leave out any advantages. On the other hand, they do not present any of their negatives, only their own positives. The tactic emphasizes the issue's positive elements while minimizing any negative incidents in order to persuade audiences and influence their opinions.

It is also one of propaganda's most effective tools for persuasion. It is predicated on the notion that "big name" individuals are employed to support a cause. The testimonial technique is used to compel a liked or hated person to express whether a specific concept, strategy, or person is excellent or terrible (Lee & Lee 1939). We are far less likely to be critical of testimony given by a well-known celebrity. Testimonials are frequently quoted statements made by a well-known person or authority that propagandists use to support their political agenda.

The typical definition of persuasion as a subset of communication is a communicative process to influence others (Jowett, 2005). With their publication of "Persuasion as a Political Concept" in 1984, Peter Burnell and Andrew Reeve established a foundation for political persuasion. They contend that the requirement of "good faith" distinguishes persuasion from other, less desirable types of influence (manipulation, compulsion, indoctrination, etc.), and that when used effectively, persuasion can be a very effective instrument in politics.

According to (Schwartz, 1974) persuasion occurs when the message evokes an idea,

sensation, or memory connected to the pitch rather than telling the listener what to think or feel. A standard definition of persuasion is "human communication intended to persuade others by changing their views, values, or attitudes" (Simons, 1976). According to (O'Keefe, 1990) for something to be considered compelling, the sender, the method, and the recipient must all be satisfied. First, persuasion requires the message sender to have a goal and the will to work toward achieving that goal. Second, communication is a tool for achieving that objective. Third, the message recipient must have free choice (forcing someone to obey by threatening them with damage is typically viewed as force, not persuasion). Therefore, persuasion is neither accidental nor forceful. It naturally involves communication.

With the help of persuasion, people's views, values, and behavior can be changed to meet shared needs. Persuasion is directly impacted by trust. Persuasion, according to (O'Reilly & Tennant, 2009), always entails a benefit being promised, creating an implicit contract. It is a contract. If the promise is not kept, it will be broken and trust will be weakened. A broken promise would result in failure under Aristotle's system. When a convincing argument is made, the communicator's character, or ethos, is intended to benefit the giver and tends toward propaganda, or coercion.

When a persuasive argument promises to fulfill their wants or needs, people are more receptive to it. Because of this, the persuader must consider both his or her own needs and those of the persuadee. Both parties are dependent on one another during the process of persuasion. There is an interactive or transactive dependency present. Transactive denotes a more continuous and dynamic method of co-creating meaning, whereas interactive suggests taking turns.

METHOD

In order to thoroughly examine how electorates perceive the visual design aspects in political advertising, this study employs a research design using a mixed-methods research methodology that combines more of review and content and qualitative techniques. Content analysis will be performed on political advertising materials, such as billboards, posters, and flyers, from different political parties in Ghana-Kumasi. This analysis will concentrate on the text, graphics, and visual design components found in these documents. Focus groups with a portion of the sampled electorate will be used to collect qualitative data. These talks will offer detailed insights into how various people perceive visual design components and how they feel about political advertising.

RESULTS AND DISUSSIONS

Candidates running for public office often use political advertising as a kind of outreach to voters. Political advertising is defined by scholars as the use of media by a political party's candidate to improve voter exposure to the party and candidate (Adanlawo & Reddy , 2020). According to some academics, political advertising in electoral campaigns is a form of marketing used to attract and sway voters (Akinola & Adekunle, 2022). They go on to say that it helps political parties, and their candidates allocate their resources and gain a better understanding of the factors that influence voters' choices. Therefore, one can

assert that the main goal of political advertising is the promotion of ideas, inspiring voters to make decisions and mold their attitudes, including their political views. According to the message or content's nomenclature, (Owuamalam, 2014) describes political advertising. He observes political advertisements that are intended to persuade viewers to change their voting preferences. (Okwechime, 2015) supports the aforementioned by arguing that political advertising is a tactic of a political campaign that is frequently seen as a byproduct of electronic age communication meant to sway voters.

In Ondo State's general elections in 2015, (Felix & Olakunle, 2017)found that political advertising had no effect on voter turnout. They claimed that this was the case because political campaign commercials had no impact at all on the electorates. This outcome conflicts with that of other investigations (Okpara, Anuforo, & Achor, 2016).

Even though some academics concur that political advertising is crucial to every election campaign, several political strategists disagree on how much it affects voters' decisions. Political media campaigns have a significant impact on voting behavior, according to political campaign researchers like Iyenga in the past. The effectiveness of political advertising communication in elections has, however, been better understood in recent studies. "Variations in candidate support during the campaign season are mostly linked to the occurrence of campaign events," wrote (Holdbrook, 1996). Political advertising, according to (Iyenga & Simon, 2000), is persuasive rather than manipulative since it informs voters about the positions of the candidates and enables them to generate unique impressions of them.

According to (Key, 1964) election campaigns are a systemic manipulation of the general population's thinking. Parties and candidates employ techniques and strategies to express their love for the people in order to win their support for governing them. He sees campaigns as a strategy used by rival political groups to educate the public about candidates and their stances on various issues. They see political campaigns as a complex process in which candidates use the media to sway people's opinions. Election campaigns were further characterized by (Marletti & O'Neil , 2001) as the time when the use of propaganda and other electoral communication techniques was at its highest. (Enns & Richman, 2013) claim that early electoral campaign researchers looked at the significance of campaigns in an effort to predict election outcomes.

This causes some voters to be politically uninformed about campaign issues, which forces these voters to choose a leader based on core criteria that they share with a candidate (Nadeau, Nevitte, Gidengil, & Blais, 2001). While it has been claimed that during political campaigns, the electorate pays more attention to negative information than to similarly extreme positive information, negative information may also have a backlash effect due to factors like lack of source credibility (Jasperson & Fan, 2002) and an abundance of negative advertisements (Shapiro & Riegger, 1992).

Voting behavior is a collection of individual electoral behaviors, such as involvement in electoral campaigns, voting attendance, and candidate selection (Bratton & Kimenyi, 2008). A range of internal elements, including perception, attitude, motivation, emotion, learning, and memory, can be used to explain voting behavior (Ghiuță, 2014). Issues surface

during every election, setting the tone and perhaps determining the result. Some of these problems inspire or have an impact on voters' choices of how they will vote in the election. As a result, it is possible to argue that the promises and policies adopted by political candidates and their political parties and presented to voters determine the results of the elections.

Three schools of thought evolved from the research of people's voting behavior. First, the sociological model, frequently referred to as the "School of Columbia," with its primary source being the Applied Bureau of Social Research at Columbia University. The work of Campbell, Converse, Miller, and Stokes serves as the primary source for the psychosocial model, commonly known as the School of Michigan school of thinking (1960).

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According to (Bratton 2004), campaign missteps target the impoverished in rural areas and have lasting repercussions. These consequences are as follows: political loyalty is increased by vote buying, while turnout is decreased by violence. Compliance with political demands is not guaranteed, probably because the majority of people condemn political game-playing as wrong. According to a recent study by (Bratton & Kimenyi, 2008) Kenyans who are most devoted to maintaining their ethnic identity are also the ones who are most likely to vote racially. Ugandans cast their ballots after candidates have completed their terms, favoring those who have done well. Retrospective voting has been verified in numerous nations across the world (Lohmann, Brady, & Rivers, 1997). There are numerous discoveries that reveal evidence of retrospective voting on the African continent, even though each of them has limits (Lindberg & Morrison, 2008).

CONCLUSIONS

These studies demonstrate that regardless of their race, African voters base their voting choices on the candidate's performance. In a related study, (Blaydes, 2006) contends that Egyptian voters turn out to the polls or vote only because they anticipate receiving material rewards. (Shi, 1999) finds that voters in China's elections vote out of a desire to punish dishonest politicians. (Chen & Zhong, 2002) are of the opinion that people who strictly identify with the current government or party in power are more inclined to vote. According to (Bratton, 1999), institutional ties between people and the state in Zambia are what determine people's political involvement. This claim is supported by evidence, according to (Kuenzi & Lambright, 2005) who assert that those with stronger links to political parties are more inclined to vote.

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