Socio-Demographic Variables as Correlates of Audience Response to Broadcast Political Campaign Messages in Ogun State, Nigeria

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Abstract: The study examined the relationship between socio-demographic variables and audience response to political campaign messages in Ogun State, Nigeria. It was anchored on the reception theory and it employed the survey research design for a population of 1,947,258 registered voters. Multistage cluster sampling technique guided the sampling of 1,100 voters. The questionnaire was used as instrument for collection of data which were analysed using descriptive statistics while Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and chi-square were used to validate the hypotheses. The result shows that gender, age, membership of political party, educational qualification and occupation were correlates of audience response to political campaign messages. Also, the study revealed a joint contribution of the five socio-demographic variables to the prediction of the audience response to political campaign messages. While gender, age, educational qualification and occupation had a relative significant contribution to response to political campaign messages, membership of political parties of the audience did not.

Keywords: Audience response, Political campaign messages, Socio-demographic variables, Ogun State, Nigeria.

I.   Introduction

Democratic governance as currently experienced by most countries including Nigeria, provides a platform for people to actively participate in the process by which they are governed. One of the key elements of democratic governance is the right to vote and be voted for. When an individual desires a political office, there is need to reach out to the electorate through political campaign messages. The effective communication between political parties, political office seekers and electorate is expedient in ensuring an informed election of leaders by the electorate in the furtherance of democracy.

However, the advent of new media or changes in media technology results in a shift in the way political campaign messages are disseminated. In democracies of the 20th and 21st centuries, the mass media have emerged as the popular fora in which political ideas and proposals are launched, tested and contested [1]. It is noteworthy that the media have the responsibility of covering political campaigns and communicating such messages to their audiences. According to [2], [3], the aim of the political campaign messages is to bring about a desired political change by persuading and stimulating response from their audiences. This probably explains why there has been an increasing preference for the communication of political campaigns in the media since 1999 when Nigeria returned to democracy after many years of military rule. The use of the mass media has reduced the use of personal contact and rallies which used to characterize the mobilization of the electorate for electoral support [4][5].

When political campaign messages are presented, voters give their response by supporting or accepting a candidate while rejecting another [6]. While response can come in form of opinion polls before elections, most election campaigns are based on getting the favourable audience response of voters on the day of election, when actual winners of electoral contests emerge. No wonder the target of the electioneering campaign is to maximize responses on the day of election [7]. The focus of this study is the influence of social demographic variables on the voters' response by voting for, voting against or abstaining from voting a candidate on the day of election.

People can share an understanding of what is being presented but differ in their response to it through acceptance or rejection. Similarly, more recent studies have indicated that audience response to media content can be highly individual. The implication of this is that individual factors could influence audience response to political campaign messages. Whereas some studies like that of [8] investigates political campaign messages on voters' turnout, there seems to be none on individual factors in the form of socio-demographic variables as

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determinants of response to political campaign messages. This gap in knowledge prompted this study to examine the socio-demographic variables of electorate as correlates of audience response to political campaign messages.

The main objective of this study is to investigate the socio-demographic variables as correlates of audience responses to political campaign messages through voting in Ogun State, Nigeria. To achieve this, the specific objectives of the study are to:

1. Examine the relationship between gender and audience's voting response to political campaign messages in Ogun State, Nigeria.
2. Investigate the relationship between age and audience's voting response to political campaign messages in Ogun State, Nigeria.
3. Investigate the relationship between political party membership and audience's voting responses to political campaign messages in Ogun State, Nigeria.
4. Examine the relationship between educational qualification and audience's voting responses to political campaign messages in Ogun State, Nigeria.
5. Examine the relationship between occupation and audience's voting response to political campaign messages in Ogun State, Nigeria.

While the following null hypotheses were formulated and were tested at .05 level of significance:

Ho1: There is no significant joint contribution of the independent variables (gender, age, political party, educational qualification and occupation) to audience response to political campaign

Ho2: There is no significant relative contribution of the independent variables (gender, age, political party, educational qualification and occupation) to audience response to political campaign

II. Literature Review

This section of the article reviews literature on the dependent variable of audience response to political campaign messages and the relationship between this dependent variable to the independent variables (socio-demographic variables) in a bid to support the objectives of the study as well as the null hypotheses generated.

2.1 Conceptual and Empirical Studies on Audience response to political campaign messages

Researchers have paid considerable attention to political campaigns in democracies in Central and Eastern Europe, Latin America and Asia [9]. Specifically, extensive research has focused on understanding the role of campaign organizations, how political campaign messages are generated and developed, how they are transmitted via direct channels such as paid political adverts, published literature like party manifestoes, leadership speeches as well as by mediated channels including newspaper, radio, television and media websites [10].

[11] defines a message as the substance or content of a communication act. Media messages are the programmes, film, images, texts, sounds and websites carried by different forms of communication [12]. In politics, the message is the theme of the campaign and it differentiates a candidate from his opponent (s). For Barack Obama in the 2008 election in the United States of America, it was "change". For John McCain, it was "security in a dangerous world". The All Progressive Congress (APC) party in the 2015 general election in Nigeria adopted "change" as its message.

The campaign team of a political party usually prepares the campaign message to persuade as many people as possible to vote for a candidate or a party to win an election. Political campaign messages help voters to be familiar with political parties, their manifestoes and candidates and this knowledge helps voters to cast informed ballots during elections [13]. In addition, he contends that while an average political office seeker seeks the media for publicity, the media, on the other hand, seek the politicians' campaign messages to provide news and money for the broadcasting station. This explains the symbiotic relationship between the politician and the media.

It also points to the power inherent in a well-packaged political campaign message. It directs attention to the vulnerability of an undiscerning voter-recipient of such a message. To get the message registered in the minds of the voters, it must be emphasised in every message the candidate or his party sends out to the voters [14]. According to this scholar, [14], the campaign message may centre on the candidate's strong area of strength. After drafting the message, several issues can then be summarized from the message for use throughout the campaign e.g. "Better pay for teachers", "better schools for children". Such messages can be passed orally during open-air campaigns or communicated to the voters through direct mail, radio, television, advertising, speeches and campaign literature, billboards, tee shirts, fliers, posters and internet.

However, according to [15], television has become the main medium of campaign events. Earliest research on campaign communication in America was by Lazarsfeld and his colleagues while televised campaigns started in the 1950s. Since then, radio and television have been used by politicians to sell their

parties' programmes and candidates to voters. The number of people who receive political information from television is increasing. For instance, in the 1994 European elections, while only 7% of the electorate reported being contacted by party workers during the campaign, 65% were aware of the campaign through radio and television [16].

In modern day elections, a well-organized campaign and carefully designed political campaign talking points are essential for victory. Little wonder then that politicians in Nigeria spend a lot of time and money to get their political campaigns broadcast, sometimes live, to their target electorate. The goal is to get the votes of the electorate. Campaign messages have some techniques which are used to attract audience's attention and manipulate their emotion [17]. The media, especially the television, can produce emotionally powerful messages by altering images without the audience, especially the non-literate ones, even knowing it.

[18] similarly observes that politics actually colours a lot of media reporting in Nigeria, thereby making informed decision difficult for the electorate. A recent culprit, the Ondo State Broadcasting Service, was accused of overt bias in favour of the incumbent Governor Olusegun Mimiko during the campaign for the 2012 governorship election.

There are two broad ways of getting political campaign message across to the voters: free media and paid advertisement. According to [19] and [20] media financed by adverts exclusively will serve the interests of the advertisers and there is no guarantee that public interests will be served well. Such perceived dangers of paid media led to the Communications Act 2003 which imposed a ban on any paid advert on radio and television in the United Kingdom. Instead free time is given to each political party for the broadcast of its campaign message. Apparently, free media can be more believable and effective since it is available to all. This study focused on free political campaign messages from the broadcast media.

2.2 Socio-demographic variables and audience response to political campaign messages

Demographic variables such as age, gender, finance and socio-economic status can determine access to the media [21] which constitutes a construct of media literacy in this study. It is noteworthy that variables such as age, gender, locale, income level, habits, ethnicity and interests influence contents of broadcast media. Similarly, according to [22], 75% of Nigerians are rural dwellers and 80% of them are not covered by the media. This means that even when the mass media reach the rural areas, there is almost no provision for feedback from the rural areas and therefore no reflection of the views of a vast majority of the population. Incidentally, according to [23] the poor majority are more likely to vote than the rich or middle class, so turn out is higher in rural than urban areas.

Factors which influence audience response to media message are political affiliation, age, ethnicity and the gender of the receiver [24]. This explains why there may be plurality of meanings and variety of responses from the audience. Therefore, socio-demographic variables may reveal different points of view in the interpretations given to the messages received. Furthermore, [25] in a study of psycho-demographic influence on voting behaviour found that there was significant effect of age and sex on voting behaviour. [26] also revealed that sex and education had impact on voting pattern.

However, there was no joint influence of age, ethnicity, social class, self-esteem and media on voting behaviour in [25] work. These findings show that citizens do not respond passively to messages but that some factors influence how the electorate respond by voting in any election. This supports the reception theory by Stuart Hall which centres on the idea that audiences vary in their response to mass media message. The reason is that they are influenced by their social position, gender, age, ethnicity, occupation, experience and beliefs, among others.

2.3 Theoretical framework

This study was anchored on the Reception theory, otherwise known as reception analysis which was developed by British sociologist and cultural studies scholar, Stuart Hall in an essay entitled "Encoding/Decoding in the Television Discourse" in 1973. Hall proposed a new theory of mass communication which highlighted the relevance of active interpretation of media messages by the audience. In simple terms, the theory postulates that the audience differs and can play an active role in decoding messages. His theory claims that television and other media audiences are presented with messages that are decoded, or interpreted in various ways depending on an individual's social contexts, gender, age, occupation, cultural background, economic standing and personal experiences. This confirmation of a relationship between audience response and audience demographic variables is similar to [27] position that audience response is heterogeneous.

This perspective represents a change of attention by researchers from the media itself to media audiences. It is contrary to the theories that disempower audiences such as the hegemonic theory and the magic bullet theory which state that the media have the power to directly cause certain behaviour in an individual. The audience, according to the reception theory, negotiates the message received through the media.

Hall categorized three kinds of audience response. One is the dominant reading which suggests that the audience agrees with the dominant values contained in the preferred reading of the message. The second is the negotiated reading in which the audience generally agrees with the dominant values in the preferred reading but they may disagree with certain aspects according to their social background. The third is the oppositional reading which suggests that the audience disagrees with the dominant values expressed within the preferred reading of the message. This resistance in audience response also shows agreement with [27].

The recognition this theory accords the relationship between socio-demographic variables and audience response to messages also makes it useful to this study; to investigate the extent to which the theory influences the response of the audience in the political campaign communication process.

III. Methodology

The study employs survey research design of the ex-post facto type for a population of 1, 947, 258 registered voters drawn across has 3 senatorial districts: East (with 581, 878 registered voters in the 2011 general election), West (with 617, 601 registered voters) and Central (with 747, 779 registered voters). Whereas, multistage cluster sampling technique guided the sampling procedure in the selection of 1100 voters using across the three senatorial districts in line with [28] recommendation; with the aid of convenient sampling.

The questionnaire was used as instrument for data collection with a pilot study carried out to test the simplicity, clarity and accuracy of the instrument. The questionnaire was administered on seventy five (75) participants and a focus group discussion with nine (9) selected participants who claimed to have voted in the 2011 general elections. They were from Bodija and Apete in Ibadan. The pilot study data were analysed using test and retest was run to get the reliability co-efficient to yield a reliability coefficient level of 98%. All necessary corrections were effected in drafting the final version of the questionnaire.

The data collection was carried out by trained personnel in the area of mass communication with registration and voting in the 2011 gubernatorial election in Ogun State was a prerequisite for participation in the study. The data collected were analysed using descriptive statistics while Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and chi-square were used to validate the hypotheses.

IV. Presentation of Results and Discussion

The section shows the analysis of data collected in line with the objectives of study and generated hypotheses with the aim of ascertaining socio-demographic as correlates of audience response to political campaign messages.

Table 1: Socio-demographic variables of the respondents

S/N	Variable	Labels	Frequency	Percentage
1	Gender	Male	540	50
		Female	540	50
2	Age	18-30 years	583	54. 0
		31-43 years	234	21. 7
		44-56 years	199	18. 4
		57-69 years	36	3. 3
		70-82 years	28	2. 6
3	To which political party do you belong?	PPN	108	10. 2
		PDP	308	28
		ACN	321	29. 7
		SDP	42	3. 9
		Labour Party	49	4. 5
		NCP	39	3. 6
		Others	216	20. 0
4	Highest educational qualification	School Cert	347	32. 1
		NCE	182	16. 9
		OND	100	9. 3
		HND	155	14. 4
		First Degree	200	18. 5
		Primary sch	96	8. 9
5	Occupation	Civil Servant	290	26. 9
		Private	366	33. 9
		Self-employed	185	17. 1
		Student	201	18. 6
		Retiree	38	3. 5

The data presented in Table 1 above represent the percentage count and frequency distribution of the socio-demographic features of the respondents. The table shows that among the 1, 080 respondents who responded to the questionnaire, 50% were male while 50% were female. Findings revealed that 54% of the respondents were within 18-30 years age bracket; 21.7% were within 31-43 years; 18.4% were within 44-56 years; 3.3% were within 57-69 years of age while 2. 6% were within 70-82 years.

On party membership, 28% indicated they were PDP members, 29.7% were ACN members, PPN members constituted 10. 2%, SDP had 3.9%, Labour Party had 4.5%, NCP had 3.6% while other respondents were 20% of the respondents. On whether respondents voted in the 2011 general elections, all the respondents (100%) did so. This was another precondition for the purposive selection of respondents.

On the higher qualification of the respondents, 32.1% indicated school certificate; 16.9% indicated NCE; 9.3% indicated OND; 14.4% indicated HND; 18.5% indicated First Degree and 8. 9% had other educational qualifications. On respondents' occupation, 26.9% of the voters were civil servants, 33. 9% were private workers. Out of the respondents, 17.1% were self-employed; 18.6% were students while 3.5% were retirees.

It is noteworthy from the socio-demographic data that more than half (54%) of the respondents were very young, between 18 years and 30 years of age. All the respondents were registered and they voted in the 2011 general elections. Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN) and People's Democratic Party (PDP) had the highest number of members (29. 7%) and 28% respectively. The two have been the leading parties in terms of membership in Ogun State and Nigeria. In terms of level of formal education, 32.1% of the respondents had School Certificate and this was the highest. 33.9% of the respondents were in private business while 26.9% were civil servants

Table 2: Cross tabulation of gender and voting responses

		Gender		
		Male	Female	Total
Voting Responses		224	160	384
	Voted For	58.3%	41.7%	100.0%
	Voted Against	190	191	381
		49.9%	50.1%	100.0%
	Avoided Voting	172	143	315
		54.6%	45.4%	100.0%
	Total	586	494	1080
		54.3%	45.7%	100%
		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Table 2 shows that audience members (58.3%) who are male responded to political campaign messages by voting in favour compared to females (41.7%). who voted in favours. Men who voted against were 49.9% while women were (50.1%). Voters who avoided voting were 54.6% male and 45.4% female. This means that more men (58.3%) voted in favour of the messages than women (41.7%). Conversely, a slightly little (50.1%) more women than men (49.9%) voted against the message. More men avoided voting (54.6%) than women 45.4%. Gender is therefore a correlate of audience response to political campaign messages.

Table 3: Cross tabulation of age and voting responses

	Age					
Voting Responses	18-30 yrs	31-43 yrs	44-56 yrs	57-69 yrs	70-82 yrs	Total
Voted For	156	101	74	30	23	384
	40.6%	26.3%	19.3%	6.0%	6.0%	100.0%
Voted Against	76	89	212	3	1	381
	19.9%	23.4%	55.6%	8%	3%	100.0%
Avoided Voting	215	44	49	3	4	315
	68.3%	14.0%	15.6%	1.0%	1.3%	100.0%
Total	583	234	199	36	28	1080
	54.0%	21.7%	18.4%5	3.3%	2.6%	100.0%

Data in table 3 indicate that a higher number of younger voters aged 18 to 43years (66.9%) than older voters aged 44 – 82 years (33.1%) responded by voting in favour of the messages. Conversely, a higher percentage of older voters (55.6%) than younger voters (43.3%) voted against the messages. Voters who avoided voting were mainly younger individuals aged 18 to 43 years (82.3%) while only 17.9% of the audience members in this age group avoided voting. It also implies that younger people voted mostly in favour of political campaign messages while older voters voted against the messages. Thus age is a correlate of audience response to political campaign messages.

Table 4: Cross tabulation of Political Party membership and voting responses

Voting Responses	Political Party Membership					NCP	Total
	PPN	PDP	CAN	SDP	Labour paty		
Voted For	67	169	39	54	30	25	384
	17.4%	44.0%	10.2%	14.1%	7.8%	6.5%	100.0%
Voted Against	67	163	38	54	33	26	381
	17.6%	42.8%	10.0%	14.2%	8.7%	6.8%	100.0%
Avoided Voting	55	137	33	46	29	15	315
	17.5%	43.5%	10.5%	14.6%	9.2%	6.8%	100.0%
Total	180	469	110	154	92	66	1080
	17.5%	43.4%	10.2%	14.3%	8.5%	6.1%	100.0%

Table 4 shows that the majority of the audience who voted in favour of the political campaign messages were members of the PDP (44%) while the majority of those who avoided voting belong to the same party (43.5%). The obvious observation is that the ruling political party then (PDP) had the highest number of voters. Party membership is thus another correlate of audience response to political campaign messages. The possible explanation here is that there was lack of unity concerning the choice of governorship candidate in the party in Ogun State (No wonder, it lost the 2011 election to an opposition party.

Table 5: Cross tabulation of educational qualification and voting responses

Voting Responses	Highest educational qualification					Pry School	Total
	Sch Cert	NCE	OND	HND	First Degree		
Voted For	101	31	80	39	85	48	384
	26.3%	8.1%	20.8%	10.2%	22.1%	12.5%	100.0%
Voted Against	120	54	36	67	83	21	381
	31.5%	14.2%	9.4%	17.6%	21.8%	5.5%	100.0%
Avoided Voting	32	48	33	49	126	27	315
	10.2%	15.2%	10.5%	15.6%	40.0%	8.6%	100.0%
Total	200	182	110	155	347	96	1080
	18.5%	16.9%	9.3%	14.4%	32.1%	8.9%	100.0%

Table 5 shows that audience members with low level of formal education (Primary, Secondary and OND; 59.6%) voted in favour of the political campaign messages. Those with high level of education (NCE, HND & Degree;53.6%). voted mostly against the political campaign messages. Audience members who avoided voting were mostly highly educated individuals (40 %) with University Degrees. These data suggest that highly educated audience members tend to avoid or vote against political campaign messages while those with low educational qualification tend to vote in favour of political campaign messages, making level of former education a correlate of response to political campaign messages.

Table 6: Cross tabulation of occupation and voting responses

Voting Responses	Occupation					
	Civil Servant	Private	Self-empl oyment	Student	Retirees	Total
Voted For	90	90	102	80	22	384
	23.4%	23.4%	26.6%	26.6%	5.7%	100.0%
Voted Against	104	130	54	81	12	381
	27.3%	34.1%	14.2%	21.3%	3.1%	100.0%
Avoided Voting	96	146	29	40	4	315
	30.5%	46.5%	9.2%	12.7%	1.3%	100.0%
Total	290	366	185	201	38	1080
	26.9%	33.9%	17.1%	18.6%	3.5%	100.0%

According to this table, self-employed members of the audience constituted the highest number of voters (26.6%) who voted in favour of the political campaign messages. The lowest group of members of the audience who voted in favour of the messages were the retirees. Conversely, members of audience working in private organizations mostly voted against (34.1%) the political campaign messages. The group with the higher percentage of members of audience who avoided voting was those in private employment (46.3%). Occupation is therefore a correlate of audience response to political campaign messages. These differences, according to [25] and [26], can affect voting. In addition, the responses corroborate the tenet of the reception theory which postulates that the audience members are active in the communication process.

Ho1: There is no significant joint contribution of the independent variables (gender, age, political party, educational qualification and occupation) to audience response to political campaign.

Table 7: The joint contribution of the socio-demographic variables (gender, age, political party, educational qualification and occupation) to audience response to political campaign

R	R Square			Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
.379	.143			.139	3.2831

A N O V A

Model	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Remark
Regression	1937.287	5	387.457	35.947	.000	Sig.
Residual	11576.304	1074	10.779			
Total	13513.592	1079				

Table 7 shows the joint (collective) contribution of the five socio-demographic variables to the prediction of the dependent variable audience response to political campaign messages. The table also shows a coefficient of multiple correlation (R = .379 and a multiple R^2 of .143. This means that 14.3% of the variance is accounted for by five predictor variables when taken together. The significance of the composite contribution was tested at $P < .05$. The table also shows that the analysis of variance for the regression yielded an F-ratio of 35.947 (significant at 0.05 level). This implies that the joint contribution of the socio-demographic variables to the dependent variable (audience response) was significant and that other variables not included in this model may have accounted for the remaining variance.

Ho2: There is no significant relative contribution of the independent variables (gender, age, political party, educational qualification and occupation) to audience response to political campaign

Table 8: Relative contribution of the socio-demographic variables (gender, age, political party, educational qualification and occupation) to audience response to political campaign messages

Model	Unstandardized Coefficient		Stand. Coefficient	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta Contribution		
(Constant)	10.528	.481		21.909	.000
Gender	-.542	.203	-.076	-2.674	.008
Age	.484	.101	.140	4.806	.000
Political Party	-5.123E-02	.069	-.021	-.740	.460
Educational Qualification	.385	.059	.193	6.567	.000

Occupation	.635	.087	.209	7.265	.000

Table 8. reveals the relative (individual) contribution of the five independent variables to the dependent variable, expressed as beta weights, viz: Gender (β = -.076, P <.05), Age (β = .140, P <.05), Political Party (β = -.021, P <.05), Educational Qualification (β = .193, P <.05) and Occupation (β = .209, P <.05).It is noted from the above result that while gender, age, educational qualification and occupation were significant, political party membership of the audience was not.

V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The study which was carried out to investigate socio-demographic variables as correlates of audience response to political campaign messages shows that the independent variables of gender, age, membership of political party, educational qualification and occupation were correlates of audience response to political campaign messages. Also, the study revealed that a joint contribution of the five socio-demographic variables to the prediction of the dependent variable, audience response to political campaign messages was found. While gender, age, educational qualification and occupation had a relative significant contribution to response to political campaign messages, membership of political parties of the audience did not.

In view of the findings of the study, the following are recommended:
1. Government and non-government based institutions interested in politics/governance should sensitize members of the public especially young people above 18 years, on the need to associate with political parties and participate in electioneering process without consenting to inducement.
2. Media literacy education should be provided to people especially those who cannot afford former education. This will enable them evaluate properly, political campaign messages before making voting decisions at the poll.
3. Individuals employed in private organizations should be sensitized on the need for them to participate in election activities especially registration and voting.
4. The public who are media consumers are recommended to get different points of view concerning political and/or election issues from different media sources to have an holistic view for appropriate decision at the poll.

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