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## **Developing Market-Oriented Politics in Nigeria: A Review of the 2019 Presidential Election**

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## **Developing Market-Oriented Politics in Nigeria: A Review of the 2019 Presidential Election**

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### **Abstract**

The 2015 presidential elections in Nigeria were unique in many facets. Apart from being the first time an incumbent candidate of a ruling party lost to the candidate of the opposition party, it was also the first presidential election that did not go through expensive and rigorous post-election litigations processes. From the political marketing point of view, we argued that the market-oriented approach, the purposeful, coordinated, and strategic use of marketing communication media and tools contributed to the success of APC at the 2015 presidential polls. The success story of the 2015 election gave rise to the evolution of voter-centric election campaigns, indicating that marketing and communication professionals and strategies, rather than violence and electoral fraud, have dominated and could dictate the outcomes of future elections in Nigeria. Based on the foregoing, this study reviewed the 2019 presidential election (the next election after the 2015 general election in Nigeria) to ascertain if that anticipated better tomorrow is here. We rely on experts' interviews, direct observations, and secondary materials to confirm if the political landscape in Nigeria is market-driven. Findings revealed that the 2019 presidential election was extremely monetised, violent, and fraught with all manners of electoral misconducts such that are antithetical to the principles and practice of political marketing. We aver that electioneering in Nigeria is not market-driven and voter-centric.

**Keywords:** Political Marketing; Democracy; 2019 Election; Market-Orientation; Nigeria.

## **1.0 Introduction**

In Nigeria's sixty years of independence, civilians have only ruled for thirty-one (31) years, with 1999 to date, the longest stretch. Between 1966 and 1998, the country had seven military heads of State who came into power through the barrel of guns or palace coups (Ojo, 2014; Osaghae, 1998; Ekeh, 1989). The current democratic journey, which started 29 May 1999 till date, is the fourth and the longest in the political history of the country. The 1959 election was the precursor to the first democratic dispensation, which commenced 1960, and this only lasted six years. The second attempt, which started in 1979, came to an abrupt end with the military coup of 1983. The June 1993 elections, globally adjudged the freest and fairest election in Nigeria (Siollum, 2008; Akinola, 2004), was never allowed to stay. It was only after another six years of military rule that the 1999 elections commenced the current political journey, which is now in its 21<sup>st</sup> year. It does appear that the era of military incursion into politics through coup and upheaval is over and the idea that politicians and indeed the country must be allowed to learn and grow its democracy seems to have found listening ears.

Democracy is a form of government popularly understood to be the government of the people, by the people and for the people (Lincoln, 1863). Similarly, marketing is meeting target markets' needs and wants profitably. Democracy and marketing both have the 'people' as their primary focus. The marriage of politics and marketing or better-still the adoption of the principles and practice of marketing into politics is presumed to be profitable to both the political party/candidate (producer) and the target voter (market) (Lees-Marshment, 2003; Scammell, 2014). What defines democracy as a form of government is that the people, like customers in business, are the kings (Kotler's, 1975). Elected officials are accountable to the electorate, and at prescribed intervals, the politicians must return to the electorate to seek their mandate to be or continue in office. Election and the processes leading to it are critical parameters in determining the quality of a country's governance (Baine, Brennan & Egan, 2003). In this study, we argue that periodical review of elections, the processes leading to them, matters arising from the elections, and the behaviour of the political actors is a worth-while exercise towards the entrenchment of real democracy.

A 2017 study of the knowledge, strategies, trends, and practice of political marketing in the six southwestern states of Nigeria between 1999 and 2015 (Akinola, 2017), revealed that most of the political party leaders, candidates, and their consultants are not aware of the concept of political

marketing, neither are they market-oriented in their election campaign. However, at the presidential election stage, there was ample evidence to conclude that the adoption of market-oriented strategies by All Progressives Congress (APC) gave the party and its presidential candidate, Muhammadu Buhari the edge in the battle for 'Aso Rock' in 2015 (See, Akinola, 2017 for an extensive review). The use of market research, local and international campaign consultants, integrated marketing communication tools, and a voter-centric campaign by APC suggested the possible emergence of market-orientation, political marketing firms, and professionals in Nigeria. Now that the 2019 elections have come and gone, with Muhammadu Buhari of APC defeating Abubakar Atiku of the opposition Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP) to retain the presidency, the critical question is; what has happened to the hope of a market-oriented campaign and the emergence of political marketing firms and professionals in Nigeria?

In this study, we reviewed the 2019 presidential election in Nigeria, vis a vis the anticipated adoption of market-orientation and the emergence of political marketing firms and professionals. The study equally assessed the use of marketing communication tools and strategies, the behaviour of the political leaders, candidates and the electorate, conduct of the election, and matters arising from elections. Apparently, this study leads the debate on political marketing strategy and its associative consequences for untainted democratic dispensation in Nigeria. The intricacies of political marketing discourse in transforming the political landscape in Nigeria underpin this study. Having introduced the study, other sections are 2.0, which appraise the past literature on the subject matter, 3.0 discusses the research design, 4.0 presents the results and interpretation, and 5.0 concludes.

## **2.0 Literature Review**

The rise of political marketing and research into it can be dated back to the early 1970s with the works of Kotler & Levy (1969); Kotler & Zaltman (1971); Kotler (1972); and Hunt (1976) just to mention a few. Political marketing research and application of marketing principles and practice to politics have equally grown exponentially. There is no doubt that democracy, a people-centered form of government, that subscribes to election at regular intervals and the spirit of competition is a significant contributor to the development of political marketing. Similarly, changes in politics and the political market-place such as the candidate, political party or government, voters' behaviour, electoral systems, declining party loyalty, development and

expansion of the media, the emergence of marketing-savvy consumers, political marketing consultants and advisers accounted for the development of political marketing (Mair & Van Biezen, 2001; Brown, 2003; Lees-Marshment, 2009). The incursion of marketing into politics or what Lees-Marshment (2001a) termed the 'marriage' of marketing and politics has not been smooth (McDonnell & Taylor, 2014). While some see the union as perfect, others consider it a union of strange bed-fellows. In this section, the focus is on the conceptualisation of political marketing, argument for and against political marketing, relevance of market orientation, political marketing in Africa and political campaign and elections in Nigeria.

### **Conceptualising Political Marketing**

Newman (1994), describes political marketing as the application of marketing principles and procedures in political campaigns by individuals and organisations, which entails the understanding of voter's needs, and the development of a product to satisfy those needs. In the opinion of Wring (1997), political marketing is the use of opinion research and environmental analysis by political parties or candidates to produce and promote a competitive offering that will help realise organisational aims and satisfy groups of electors in exchange for their votes. Lees-Marshment (2001b:1074) describes political marketing as the political organisations' adaptation of business marketing concepts and techniques to help them achieve their goals (such as win elections or pass legislation). For Giasson et al., (2012), political marketing incorporates business marketing concept to the practice and study of politics and government. In practical terms, political marketing is about political organisations using business practices to inform and shape its strategic behavior that are designed to satisfy citizens' needs and wants. Hughes & Dann (2004) define political marketing as political communications, organisational function, and a set of processes for creating, communicating, and delivering promises of value to customers and for managing customer relationships in ways that benefit the political organisation and its stakeholders. Meanwhile, Soleimani & Monem (2017) see political branding and marketing as concepts tied to the elections. They opine that these concepts strengthen trust between political stakeholders.

The many diverse definitions and interpretations of political marketing offered by scholars has not only expanded the scope of political marketing, it has also given it a different meaning.

While some scholars and practitioners associate political marketing with election campaign and political communication, it must be clearly stated that though, political marketing does entail election campaign and political communication, it goes much further than that. Political marketing potentially addresses the way politicians, political parties and governments behave, not just how they communicate that behaviour (Lees-Marshment, 2009:28). The assumption that political marketing is all about campaign (formulation and distribution of messages through various media) is not only wrong but undemocratic. Just as marketing never ends in commercial business, political marketing has also been extended to cover political parties and candidate's behaviour outside of election campaigns. Lilleker & Lees-Marshment (2004:22) advocate that political parties and candidates should maintain a market orientation while in government. They suggest that political parties and candidates in government should create space and time to think about product design/development for future policies. Whether the campaign extends outside of the traditional election campaign period or not, the ultimate goal is assumed to be the same: to win the next election. It is, therefore, safe to see political marketing as a marketing management strategy directed towards understanding and meeting the needs and wants of electors for the mutual benefit of the party, candidate, electorate, and the society in the long-term.

### **Conceiving Political Marketing**

In a bid to theorise political marketing, Lees-Marshment (2001a and 2001b) and Ormrod (2005) have proposed Comprehensive Political Marketing (CPM) and Political Market Orientation (PMO), respectively. The two models, though, dialectically different, fundamentally advance similar behaviour from political actors. Lees-Marshment (2001a and 2001b) theorise the existence of three basic types of political parties, the product, the sales, and the market-oriented party. The product-oriented party designs its policies internally and communicates its merits to the voting market. A product-oriented party is known by its policies (ideology); the party's policies will remain irrespective of the electoral result. The sales-oriented party is similar to a product-oriented party in the sense that its policies are designed internally. However, realising that not all of the electorates will automatically buy into its policies and vote for it, the sales-oriented party uses market intelligence to determine and design communication techniques from the business world to sell its policies. The market-oriented party, on the other hand, conducts market intelligence to determine voters' preferences and then designs a product that meets voters'

needs and wants. Unlike product-oriented and sales-oriented parties, the market-oriented party does not attempt to change what the voting public thinks; instead, it aims to deliver public needs and wants.

**Table 1. The marketing process for the product, sales and market-oriented parties.**

Stage	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
<b>POP</b>	Product design	Communication	Campaign	Election	Delivery			
<b>SOP</b>	Product design	Market Intelligence	Communication	Campaign	Election	Delivery		
<b>MOP</b>	Market Intelligence	Product design	Product adjustment	Implementation	Communication	Campaign	Election	Delivery

**POP** - Product-Oriented Party

**SOP** – Sales-Oriented Party

**MOP** – Market-Oriented Party

**Source:** Lees-Marshment (2003:16).

Ormrod's (2005) Political Market Orientation (PMO) consists of eight constructs, four representing different aspects of members' behaviour, and the other four captures the attitudes of party members towards particular stakeholder groups. He argues that a political party is market-oriented when its members are sensitive to the attitudes, needs and wants of both external and internal stakeholders, and use the information gathered to develop policies and programmes that help the party to attain its objectives.

The primary submission of these two models is that politics, particularly election campaign and governance, should be market-oriented. It must start with market intelligence/information gathering from voters and all critical stakeholders, then the development of policies and programmes that meets voters' needs and wants and helps the political party/candidate to attain its objectives. The fundamental difference here is that while information is gained from voters and party members to drive policy development in Lees-Marshment's CPM, in Ormrod's PMO, information is gained from party members, voters, competitors and the society in which the party exists to develop party policy. Fair enough, the two models give market intelligence a pride of place in formulating party policy. Lees-Marshment's (2001a, b) argument that a market-oriented party must follow and not lead, and her submission that political parties and candidates must continue to be market-oriented while in office to remain relevant, did not only provoke some

interesting arguments, it has also expanded market-orientation beyond election campaign to governance (See, Lilleker & Lees-Marshment, 2005).

The two models have contributed immensely to the development of political marketing theory and practice. In our judgement, while Lees-Marshment's CMO laid the foundation, Ormrod's PMO has added to our understanding of political marketing. Our take, however, is that a market-oriented party is voter-oriented, it designs its behaviour not to change what people think, but to deliver what they need and want. When politics and, indeed, election campaigns become voter-centric, it will generate positive interest and participation and, by extension, engender the principle of democracy (government of the people, by the people and for the people). We are, however, not unmindful of the submission of Strömbäck & Nord (2005) that simply implementing the characteristics of Lees-Marshment's (2001a & 2001b) market-oriented party, will not essentially lead to election victory in all countries and party systems. In some circumstances, a product or sales orientation could be more profitable to the firm, contingent on the nature of the competitive environment (Kohli & Jaworski, 1990). Osuagwu (2008) also submit that political marketing has many conceptualisations and dimensions, and its practice may be influenced by environmental factors, particularly in developing economies with weak democratic infrastructure.

### **The argument for and against Political Marketing**

Despite five decades of its emergence, the debate as to the relevance and otherwise of political marketing rages on. While some acknowledge marketing's contributions to politics (democracy and governance), others treat political marketing with suspicion and trepidation. Hughes (2011) alleges that political marketing killed political parties with long-term ideology and platform, and replaced them with politicians who are market-driven, short-term in focus, and chase after electoral success at any cost... He concludes that "the visionary voter disappeared with the visionary party years ago" (Hughes, 2011:4). Butler & Collins (1999) warn that adopting a voter-orientation may also lead to populist rather than rational policies and programmes. Hay (2007) opines that the marketisation of politics dilutes the saliency of elections and promotes more of ephemeral and non-policy matters rather than policy choices. Political marketing is commonly criticised for being about advertising, slogans, sound bites, and spin-doctors, basically, turning



voters to consumers. This prompted Hughes (2011:4) to conclude that "we've lost the voters, but gained the consumer."

However, in stout defence of political marketing, Scammell (2014) argues that political marketing cannot be responsible for the self-interested calculations, scandals, dirty tricks and corruption associated with modern politics; neither are these inventions of modern times. Lees-Marshment (2003) argues in favour of political marketing; she reasons that it is suitable for politics to become more responsive to citizens' needs and demands, for that are the very essence of politics itself. Scammell argues further, that unlike in the past, when leaders through the use of propaganda, shape public opinion rather than follow it, marketing has made consumers become more collectively powerful, co-creators of public policies rather than mere consumers. It has given the public "voice" not only in communication but also in shaping political programs (2014:16).

### **Relevance of Market-Orientation**

The adoption of market or marketing orientation must be on purpose and with a clear objective(s). When applied to election campaign or governance, some of the possible expected outcomes may be to outrightly win the election, win highest number of seat, some percentage of the votes, influence government policy, push for legislation, get a government to resign or to aid the party in optimising the resource allocation to each stakeholder group in order to achieve the agreed-upon party objectives' (Ormrod, 2005:52) as the case may be. In a study of the 2014 parliamentary general election in India, Safiullah, Pathak, Singh, & Anshul, (2017:12) examined the relationship between social media buzz of political parties on the number of seats won in the elections. 'The result indicates that social media buzz relating to political parties did have a positive and significant effect on seats won in 2014 general elections by political parties'. In a review of the transition of the Conservative party from the natural party of the government of UK' up to the twentieth century and its fall to the opposition bench, Pich et al. (2014) examined Conservative party's journey back to power in 2010 strictly from brand and branding point of view (Marketing orientation). Although the study did not categorically relate Conservative party's comeback to brand and branding, it, however, calls for a clear message of what the brand stands for, a shared vision and understanding of brand identity between the internal and the

external audiences and a coherent brand message at all brand touch points. This notwithstanding, one can deduce that the conscious or unconscious marketing (branding) strategy of the Conservative party is related to the comeback of 2010.

Lees-Marshment (2001a) using her Comprehensive Political Marketing (CPM) model, argues that adopting the characteristics of the market-oriented party is a prerequisite for success in general, "If the party is the most market-oriented of its main competitors, it then wins the election" (Lees-Marshment, 2001a, p. 211). The challenge with this submission is that it does warn against an unquestioning adoption of the market-oriented party model in other political systems (Ormrod, 2006:114). Strömbäck and Nord (2005) exploratory study which compared the Swedish and British political systems and the possible effects of the ability of political parties to adopt the characteristics of Lees-Marshment's (2001a) market-oriented party, came to the conclusion that there were differences both between countries and between parties in single countries, and that simply adopting the characteristics of Lees-Marshment's (2001a and 2001b) market-oriented party will not necessarily lead to election victory in all party systems; that in some political systems it may lead to an electoral backlash. Whether a political party is market-driven or market driving, it must be based on careful study of political systems and the current electoral contest and context. Market driven processes are excellent in generating incremental innovation; they rarely produce the type of radical innovation which underlies market driving companies. Market driving companies, who are generally new entrants into an industry, gain a more sustainable competitive advantage by delivering a leap in customer value through a unique business system. Market driving strategies entail high risk, but also offer a firm the potential to revolutionise an industry and reap vast rewards" (Kumar, Scheer & Kotler, (2000:129).

### **Political Marketing in Africa**

The awareness, knowledge and practice of political marketing is just developing in Africa (Mensah, 2016; Akinola, 2017). This can be attributed to the political history of most African countries. Between 1990 and 2010, there was a thirty-three percent growth in the number of countries in Africa holding the democratic election. It is equally recorded that as of 2010, eighteen countries on the African continent are classified as electoral democracies (IPI, 2011). This probably explains the paucity of academic research in the field and discipline of political marketing in Africa. This notwithstanding, scholars like Mensah, 2007; 2009; Hinson

and Tweneboah-Koduah, 2010; Gbadeyan, 2011 and a host of others have researched into election campaign strategies, party and candidate branding, election analysis, political communication and the incursion of marketing into politics in Africa. Despite these modest efforts and the "informal transmittance of knowledge made possible through the exposure to foreign contents by international media houses" (Mensah, 2016:2), political marketing still sounds novel in the ears of political actors and participants in Africa.

There is a general consensus among African political marketing scholars that serious and systematic adoption and deployment of political marketing strategies and tools will not only improve voters' satisfaction and help political parties attain their objectives; it is equally believed that it will improve the electoral process and deepen democracy (Mensah, 2007; Hinson and Tweneboah-Koduah, 2010; Gbadeyan, 2011; Girma, 2016; Akinola, 2017; Ampah, 2019). The use of marketing in politics is indispensable, but understanding how it works and its various orientations are equally important. Girma (2016) in exploring the nexus between theory and practice of political marketing in the 2005 Ethiopia election, concluded that there was a high correlation between the application of promotion, segmentation, research and intelligence, understanding reaction pattern of competitors, considering voters as customer and product development with winning elections. Hinson and Tweneboah-Koduah (2010) attributed the success of the National Democratic Congress (NDC) at the 2008 Presidential election to the defective and flawed political communication adopted by New Patriotic Party (NPP). The study identified wrong messaging, failure to communicate with grassroots groups, choice of style over substance and negative public perception of marketing as some of the factors that accounted for the failure of NPP in the 2008 presidential election.

Another study conducted in Cameroon reveals that voters' choice is largely influenced by the perceived capacity of candidate/party to improve the daily life of the citizenry, improvement in the economy, preservation of peace, nature of the election, the image of the ruling party, the campaign message, the experience of the candidate, the development of localities, and the religious affiliation of the candidate in that order (Nga Nkouma, 2018). In analysing the effectiveness of marketing mix as a satisfaction tool in contemporary Ghanaian multi-party politics, Ampah (2019) concludes that most political parties in Ghana still lack the understanding of marketing mix, hence, their failure to embrace it, and that the few political parties that adopt marketing practices in their campaign only practice the short-term techniques. This, in his view,

is responsible for voter apathy and low participation in the democratic process. Ampah (2019) also identified political gifts/communal projects, political ideology/appointees' competency and political issue literacy as obstacles to the successful adoption of political marketing in Ghana.

From the above, it is fair and safe to say that the journey towards true democracy, where the electorate is the king and market orientation takes precedence over violence, vote-buying, voter manipulation and rigging has just started. To hasten this, conscious efforts must be made to create awareness and knowledge not just for the political actors but also the participants. We must continue to advocate for the formal training and education of political actors, participants and prospective professionals as championed in Ghana (See, Mensah, 2016).

### **Political Campaign and Election in Nigeria**

Information generation, dissemination and management is critical, not only to the success of an election but also to the development of a nation. Borrowing from Ormrod (2005), information generation is the collection and analysis of voters' needs and wants. This information when properly processed gives birth to the political party product that connects with the target voters and gains the necessary level of acceptance. Information dissemination is the party-wide communication and reception of information through formal and informal channels. Member participation construct speaks to the need for inclusion, internal cohesion, creating a coherent party strategy agreed upon by all party members, while Consistent external communication is defined as the process of communicating a consistent, agreed-upon strategy to external stakeholder groups. This is consistent with Pich et al. (2014) calls for a shared vision and understanding of brand identity between the internal and the external audiences and a coherent brand message at all brand touch points.

As long as campaign information remains a critical determinant of the voter's responses, and voters response, a crucial determinant of campaign strategy (Ansolabehere, Behr, & Iyengar, 1991), the media will continue to be relevant in the market-place of politics and election campaign. Apart from providing information and education about politics, spotlighting issues and setting agenda, creating dialogue and indirectly influencing campaigns and elections (Chandrappa, 2014), the media, social media particularly is blamed for mis and dis-informing the people and causing division in the society (Hassan & Hichen, 2020). A 2019 report by the Oxford

Internet Institute found that organised social media manipulation campaigns took place in 70 countries, including Nigeria. Similarly, another investigation states that the social media landscape in Nigeria is awatched with disinformation "volume of untruths is fast overtaking the volume of truths" (See, Hassan &Hitchen, 2020:06). The circulation of rumours and fake news is not only driving division in an already divided Nigeria, it may also not be unconnected to the appalling low voter turnout in elections in Nigeria. Apart from the negative influence of the media, Ojo (2014) and Ajayi & Ojo (2014) observe that electoral violence, corruption, electoral fraud, deep-rooted ethnicity, in addition to widespread poverty and high level of illiteracy have been the bane of democracy in Nigeria. These are in addition to the ostentatious lifestyle of political office holders; non-enforcement and non-adherence to the laws guiding the electoral process; poverty and unemployment; rigging and lack of trust in the electoral tribunal. All these factors combine to make electoral violence so pervasive in Nigeria (Ojo, 2014). In an attempt to understand the best political marketing strategy political organisations can adopt to maximise voters' support and ultimately win elections, Gbadeyan (2011:10) reviewed the various political marketing strategies employed by political organisations and their members between 1999 and 2011 and their effects on the Nigerian polity and consequently highlighted four basic arenas and their primary actors: The parliamentary arena, with parliamentarians from across political parties as the primary actors. The main objective is to maximise parliamentary influence; In the electoral arena, the primary actors are the voters, and the principal aim is to maximise voters' support; Party members and the activists are the key actors in the internal arena, and the strategic goal is the maximisation of the internal cohesion of the political organisations. In the media arena, he identifies journalists as critical actors, and the strategic goal is to maximise positive publicity and downplay negative publicity. In conclusion, Gbadeyan (2011) recommends the presentation of credible and acceptable candidates for elections, eradication of 'political God fatherism' and vote-buying, ensuring that campaign information is reliable and dependable, building strong internal party cohesion and consigning politics of bitterness, violence, and negative campaign to the dust-bin of history as conditions for the entrenchment of political marketing strategies in Nigeria.

The adoption and influence of business marketing principles and practice will most likely continue to grow as long as democracy remains the most acceptable form of government. Marketing and democracy are close and related in the sense that 'target customer' and the 'people' are at the centre of the two concepts. Just as the commercial world has become competitive, the

political market is equally becoming more competitive. The fact remains that markets are not in all cases, homogeneous. The context of an election should determine the most appropriate campaign strategy. The notion that the market-oriented approach will always guarantee electoral success should be dismissed. Objective information gathering and processing, a thorough understanding of the market and issues should inform the choice of strategy. Whether the political party or candidate drives the campaign or they are driving, we must always remember that democracy is government by the people, for the people and of the people.

The over-arching aim of this study is to:

- Reviewed the 2019 presidential election in Nigeria, vis a vis the anticipated **adoption of market-orientation and the emergence of political marketing firms and professionals.**
- Assess media use and advert spendings in the 2015 and 2019 presidential elections.
- Highlight the observed fundamental differences in the 2015 and 2019 presidential elections and matters arising from the conduct of the elections.

### **3.0 Research Design**

In this section, we present the process through which information related to the study objectives was collected, analysed and communicated in-line with set objectives.

In a study of the 2015 Presidential election, Akinola(2017) observed that the ruling Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP) was product-oriented in its election campaign, while the market-oriented approach of the All Progressives Congress (APC) accounted for the party's success in the battle for 'Aso Rock.' The study also observed that some local and international Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) firms provided election campaign-related services to the two leading parties, though not widespread. Findings from this study equally show a gradual downward trend in voters' turnout. From 69% in 2003, 57% in 2007, 54% in 2011 and 43.6% in 2015. Though a whopping N4.9 Billion (Ekwujuru, 2015) was estimated to have been spent on political advertisement on traditional media, media campaign came a distant seventh among factors that influenced voters' voting decisions. The above findings from (Akinola, 2017) is the fulcrum against which this current study stands and the 2019 Presidential election in Nigeria is the unit of analysis.

In our quest to discover what has happened to the hope of a market-oriented campaign and the emergence of political marketing firms and professionals in Nigeria as perceived in the 2015 presidential election, we examined the marketing strategies adopted by the ruling and opposition political parties and their candidates in the 2019 presidential election with the goal of identifying possible similarities or dissimilarities in the process and outcome of the two elections. Observation and secondary data such as published journal articles, government publications, Newspaper and Magazine reports, Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and election monitors' reports were consulted. While secondary data such as listed, have a life of their own and can be referenced, observation is a useful empirical research method used in quantitative and qualitative true-to-life studies when understanding behaviour and interactions as they unfold in real-time is of concern (Katz-Buonincontro & Anderson, 2018). The authors monitored the process leading to the 2019 election (registration of voters and the emergence of the two leading candidates), the election and matters arising from the election. It must be clearly stated that in the build-up to the 2019 elections, the lead author advised two governorship candidates and served as a media consultant to another one. This is in addition to featuring on two popular television stations<sup>1</sup> as a political analyst and social commentator. These experiences, the authors bring to bear in this study.

Also critical to this study is the patronage of political marketing firms and professionals in the 2019 presidential election. Guided by Ohaja's (2003:75), we define the population of a study as "all those persons or things that fall under the umbrella of the topic or that can be examined to address the research problem(s) or meet the research objectives" and Babbie's (2013:115) postulation that "the population for a study is that group (usually of people) about whom we want to draw the conclusion", the Consulting Director and Head of Research, Intermodal Associates Limited, a firm that specialises in the survey and election campaign management and the Executive Vice Chairman and Group Chief Executive Officer of Verdant Zeal Group, professionals who consulted for some political parties and candidates at the 2015 and 2019 elections were purposively selected for interview. Interviewing, apart from being the most effective method of data collection when the goal of the research is to gain insight into the subjective understanding of those around us, it also enables researchers to understand the meaning that underlines participants' behaviour, and to have this meaning explained in the

participant's own words, since, it is fundamentally a person-to-person interaction, either face-to-face or otherwise (Kumar, 2014). The interview is the most appropriate when dealing with elite members of society (Russell, 2000). Kayode Oyesiku, a Professor of Development Studies and Tunji Olugbodi, an Executive Vice Chairman and Group Chief Executive Officer of a leading Integrated Marketing Communication firm are not just elite members of the society, their practical experience about the subject matter is considered relevant to this study. Data collected are thematically analysed, presented in figures and tables and then discussed in the next section (4.0).

#### **4.0 Analysis and Discussion of Findings**

##### **Adoption of market-orientation and emergence of political marketing firms and professionals.**

In this section, the expertise and field experience of Tunji Olugbodi and Kayode Oyesiku, and the direct observation of the lead author, a political marketing scholar, inform the following analysis and submissions.

Concerning the 2019 Presidential election campaign and the behaviour of the two leading political parties (APC and PDP), Olugbodi observed very little or no difference in the ideology and behaviour of the two leading political parties (APC and PDP). He described their campaign approach and their behaviours as arrogant and more product-oriented. Oyesiku shares a similar opinion, he says political parties and contestants would rather lead rather than be led. He urges campaign consultants working with politicians to be very tolerant because, rather than for the politician to listen to and learn from non-partisan professionals, they rather want to be the one dictating to and leading the professionals.

To be market-oriented, market intelligence (Lees-Marshment (2003) and information generation (Ormrod, 2005) are necessary to discover target voters needs and wants. The information gathered should ordinarily guide 'product design', 'product adjustment', 'implementation', 'communication'... and information dissemination (See, Lees-Marshment (2003) and Ormrod (2005). In the case of 2019 Presidential election, particularly as it relates to market intelligence or information gathering, Olugbodi noted that none of the political parties or the campaign organisation of the two leading candidates subscribed to detailed market research. Instead, they



designed their electoral campaign on their presumed understanding of market needs and wants. Similarly, Oyesiku cannot recall any scientific market survey conducted by any of the leading contestants towards the 2019 presidential election. The author also observed no evidence to suggest that APC or PDP conducted any serious market survey to guide their 2019 presidential campaign unlike in 2015 when APC conducted a 20,000 survey to understand and harvest electorates' needs and wants (Akinola, 2017).

In 2015, APC was reported to have enlisted the services of a foreign firm AKPD to lead its 2015 Presidential election campaign in conjunction with some other local marketing communication and media agencies. In 2019, Olugbodi reported that his organisation consulted for two Presidential candidates, one at the primary level and the other at the main election. He also confirmed that one of the leading contestants contracted the services of a foreign firm with experience in the United Kingdom, the United States, and Israel. What is unknown is the nature of the assignment and the extent of involvement in the electioneering campaign. Oyesiku observed that the availability of financial resources and the attitude of some party leaders are some of the limiting factors against the enlistment of campaign professional by candidates. He cited an instance whereby the political party leaders in a State quarrelled with the State flag-bearer for putting the campaign organisation under the consultant instead of the party leadership. The nature of Nigeria's politics and elections; where ethnicism, regionalism, vote-buying, electoral violence and fraud thrive, makes it challenging for through bred election campaign professionals to function. The interview respondents equally submit that the electorates are not better than the politicians. They observed that while the elites show severe apathy towards the electoral process, the masses would instead collect money before they vote, rather than waiting for any politician to get into office.

From the analysis of the responses, it is doubtful, if any of the leading candidates and political parties in the 2019 presidential election, scientifically conducted any market intelligence or information gathering to elicit target voters' needs and wants. What is probably sure of is that their campaign strategies and communication would have been based on their personal intuition and observation of the political market. It, therefore, appears that the 2019 election campaign strategy of APC and PDP was driven by the party/candidate rather than target voters and other key stakeholders. Although, there is evidence to show that the leading political parties and

candidates enlisted the services of local and foreign consultants, what is not clear is the nature and scope of their assignment. On the basis of the above, the strategic behaviour of the two leading parties and candidate can best be described as sales-oriented. This is because they conceived their product internally and enlisted the promotional strategist to help them sell the product. The target market had little or no input into the evolution of the party product.

### **2015 and 2019 Presidential elections and matters arising from the elections**

In this section, we highlight critical points in the pre-election, election and post-elections of 2015 and 2019 presidential polls with a view to calling attention to areas of similarity or divergence in the two elections. Table 2, 3 and Figure 1 below will be our guide.

In 2015, the general election suffered postponement for the reason of security. In 2019, a similar fate befell the general elections; this time for what the electoral umpire called logistical reasons. The number of registered voters in 2019 rose to 84 million from 67.4 million in 2015. Similarly, the number of political parties and Presidential candidates increased exponentially by 350% and 663%, respectively. Although APC adopted the direct primary option, the fact that President Buhari had no opponent, cast serious doubt on the sanctity of the process. PDP, on the other hand, settled for the delegate conference. However, the election was more of a dollar auction, where the candidate with the most bottomless purse won the ticket (See, Fabiyi, O., Akasike, C., Chiedozie, I., and Utebor, S., 2018). With the increase in the number of registered voters, presidential candidates and political parties, one would have expected a corresponding increase in the total number of eventual voters. Surprisingly, voters' turnout dropped from 43.6% in 2015 to 35.7% in 2019.

Unlike in 2015, when the incumbent PDP candidate lost to the opposition APC candidate, in 2019, the incumbent APC candidate defeated the opposition candidate of PDP. Despite the tense and divisiveness of the 2015 presidential election, the incumbent candidate of the PDP accepted defeat and congratulated the candidate of APC who was declared the winner of the election, making 2015 presidential election the first that will not be challenged in the court law. The declared result of the 2019 presidential election was, however, challenged to the highest court of the land (Supreme Court) by the candidate of PDP. Ethnicity and religion remain influential factors in Nigerian elections. The 2019 presidential election pitched a Muslim Northerner (Atiku

of PDP) against Buhari of APC, another Muslim Northerner. The 2015 battle was between a Christian from the South against a Muslim from the North. However, Table 2 and Figure 1 below, show a similar pattern in the spread of votes according to geo-political zones in 2015 and 2019. While PDP won convincingly in the South East and South-South, APC won very comfortably in North East, North West, and slightly in North Central and South West. With the exception of the annulled 12th June 1993 election, this has been the trend in national elections in Nigeria.

Electoral violence, vote-buying, and other forms of electoral misconduct remain a significant challenge to the development of democracy in Nigeria. In 2015, the Nigeria Security Tracker documented 106 election-related deaths (Campbell, 2019). In 2019, an estimated 626 persons were reported killed across Nigeria in the six months between the start of the election campaign and the commencement of the general and supplementary elections (Sanni, 2019). Vote-buying, an economic exchange between the party/candidate (buyer) and the voter (seller) "has become very effective in achieving electoral victory (hence) the resort to it is very high"(Davies, 2006:104). This phenomenon took a new dimension in the 2019 election. Whereas in 2015, politicians and their party agents paid voters upfront to influence their voting decision, in 2019, to ensure value for money spend, party agents only paid voters between N2,000 and N5,000 only when they were certain that the voter indeed cast his or her vote for their party and candidate.

The import of the above analysis is that the Nigerian electoral process is to a large extent, very predictable. Ethnicity and religion remain the most influencing factors in Nigerian elections, and electoral violence, fraud, vote-buying and other such negative variables will always come together to relegate issues and ideology to the back seat. The biggest question this analysis brings to the fore is; how representative and acceptable is a party/candidate elected only by 18% of the total registered voters?

### **Advert Spending and Media Use**

The 2010 Electoral Act as amended does not only grant INEC the power to place a limit on the amount of money or other assets an individual or group of persons can contribute to a political party (Section 90(1) ), it also stipulates spending limits to candidates (N1 billion for Presidential candidates) (Section 91(2); Section 91 (10a) stipulates punishment for violation of the financial

guideline, while section 92 (3) demand that political parties must submit an audited financial report not later than six months after the date of the election. However, there is no evidence of compliance with these provisions of the 2010 Electoral Act, and INEC has also not shown the wherewithal or willingness to enforce these provisions. As a result of these, we can only speculate and work on estimates of political campaign spending.

The 2015 Compliance and Content Monitoring (CCM) report which was based on the analysis of 260 broadcasts (radio and television) media, 48 print (newspaper and magazine) media and over 1,000 outdoor billboards across the nation throughout December 2014 and March 2015, estimated N3.23 billion was spent on media adverts for the 2015 presidential poll. In another report, Ekwujuru (2015) states that just five days to the 28th March 2015 elections, political campaign adverts placed in the various media by the two leading contending political parties were estimated to have cost N4.9 Billion. Media use and advert spending in 2019 did not follow the 2015 pattern to the disappointment of many media and Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) firms. As early as 17th January 2019, a news report on Aljazeera' AJImpact' warned that the era of big-spending for election in Nigeria is disappearing (Ahmed, 2019). Similarly, a feature story in the Daily Trust online platform on 15th February 2019, noted the low adverts patronage by Nigerian politicians (Abdallah, Krishi, Terzungwe et al., 2019).

There is a consensus among media practitioners, IMC agencies, and media observers that there was a considerable drop in media spending in the 2019 presidential election compared to the 2015 election. Abdullah et al. (2019) observed that the frequency of placement of political party and candidate's sponsored documentaries and live transmission dropped significantly in 2019. A similar trend was noticed in print and outdoor media. Tunji Olugbodi's observation that digital media platforms were mostly used in the 2019 election campaign was shared by Yushau Shuaib, founder PRNigeria who said, "politicians channelled their campaign messages through social media platforms (See, Abdullah et al., 2019). Obi (2019) also noted that traditional media lost its place to the benefit of below-the-line operators. The politicians' decision to rationalise their 2019 campaign spending by using more of non-professionals and deploying cheaper, interactive, direct and more persuasive below-the-line media such as door to door canvassing, pasting and distribution of posters and pamphlets and the placement of banners on the roads and street corners could be as a result of politicians' realisation that media campaign alone doesn't win an election (See Table 3 below).

While we observed that the number and level of a smear campaign in the traditional media in 2019 is comparably low to that of 2015, we note with serious concern the level of disinformation and the speed with which untruth now travels on the social media. "Arguably the most important change that social media has brought to Nigeria's information landscape is the speed at which content, including rumours and campaign, can now travel"(Hassan & Hitchen, 2020:06). With over 122 million Internet subscribers in Nigeria, there is no gainsaying that the new media is the information and communication bride of today. While the new media provides the avenue for interaction and relationship building, dialogue and expression of views and opinion, following and monitoring government, in the context of politics and election campaign in Nigeria, it has also become an instrument of division."The volume of disinformation now circulating in Nigeria is unprecedented and is further exacerbating pre-existing ethnic and religious tensions in the heavily divided and fragile polity" (Hassan & Hitchen, 2020:09). In their study, Hassan & Hitchen (2020) report that local and foreign non-state actors who are contracted as reputational management agents or political consultants run divisive campaigns to boost their electoral chances. They cited Cambridge Analytica and its parent company SCL Elections, and Archimedes, an Israeli-based political consulting and lobbying firm as some of the foreign non-state actors that have meddled in 2015 and 2019 elections in Nigeria (2020:07).

## **5.0 Conclusion**

Electoral fraud, violence and vote-buying have been part of Nigeria's democratic journey, particularly since 1979. Rather than take advantage of modern technology to refine our democracy, local and foreign interest has continuously continued to undermine our elections and our democracy. The 2015 elections brought a glimmer of hope, with electronic voter registration, electronic accreditation and the use of Card Readers, it appeared we were on the path of ideal democracy. The review of the 2019 presidential election shows that whatever was gained in 2015 was lost in 2019. Vote-buying increased, electoral violence and related deaths went up, Nigerians voted along with primordial sentiments of religion and ethnicity. But of major concern is the gradual downward trend in voters' turnout. It is unfortunate to record that only about 15 million out of 84 million registered voters in a total national population of over 200 million voted for the current President. This does not speak only to the political product; it probably better describes

the political market. Based on the speculative estimate of media spending, the 2015 presidential election for now, remains the costliest so far. The politicians' preference for, and adoption of the social media campaign in 2019 is a welcome development, the divisive use of the platform, however, calls for caution in a polarised country like Nigeria. Similarly, the electorate's diminishing confidence in political parties and politicians has disastrous consequences for the democratic process, especially in developing democracies such as Nigeria (See, Osuagwu, 2008:797).

Using Strömbäck and Nord's (2005) argument that political parties can only adopt market-orientation with plenty resources and where voters' decision is driven by ideology rather than party loyalty, it remains safe to conclude that adoption of market-oriented strategy by APC in the 2015 presidential election accounted for its success at the 2015 poll. The All Progressives Congress (APC) was formed in 2013 when four opposition political parties came together with the common objective of wresting power from the then ruling Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP). The unity of purpose, the human capital resources and the odious task ahead of the new party probably accounted for the organised and properly coordinated "Change" campaign executed in a market-oriented way. On the part of the then ruling party (PDP), similar to what Hinson and Tweneboah-Koduah (2010) observed concerning New Patriotic Party (NPP)'s neglect of political marketing and its defeat at the 2000 Ghana elections; the party's campaign was not organized coherently, they had multiple sources of information that operated a top-down strategy without consideration for voters' needs and wants. PDP banked on the power of money to influence the voting public. It was evident that PDP spent more money than APC, but because the party and its candidate failed to connect with the needs and aspirations of voting public, it lost the 2015 election.

At the 2019 presidential election, however, we observed no sign of market-orientation. The campaign strategy of both the ruling APC and leading opposition PDP can best be described as sale-oriented. There is no evidence of market intelligence or information gathering; both parties designed and executed their campaign based on intuition rather than scientific market research. We suspect trust-deficit, failure to deliver 2015 campaign promise of 'Change', public perception of the selective fight against corruption and increasing insecurity as some of the challenges to APC's adoption of market-orientation. It could also be the notion of the power of incumbency,

access to and patronage of public institutions and agencies and relatively weak opposition. Unfortunately, the major opposition party (PDP), failed to put his house in order, its flag bearer is primarily perceived to be corrupt and not a credible alternative to the incumbent President. Although, just like in 2015, APC narrowly won the 2019 presidential election; this confirms that market-orientation is not the only route to electoral success as suggested by Strömbäck & Nord, (2005) & Kohli & Jaworski, (1990).

We note the engagement and utilisation of local and foreign reputational management agents and political consultants in the 2019 election just like in the 2015 election. Our concern is that the political marketing industry in Nigeria is not growing and marketing principle is not allowed to flourish. A situation where the electoral umpire cannot guarantee free and fair election, where the election is a do-or-die-affair, where violence reign in place of branding and relationship building, vote-buying instead of strategic communication, there is no doubt that voters' turnout will drop and the quality of participation in such elections will be questionable as observed by Ampah (2019). It is very doubtful if ideal political marketing and political marketing professionals can thrive in this type of electoral landscape. Unfortunately, Nigerian politicians appear comfortable with this situation, where the educated and the elite segment of the electorate display apathy towards the electoral process, thereby leaving the artisans, market women, transport operators, housewives, farmers, and traders to determine who leads Nigerian government and people (see Figure 2 below).

The use of marketing in politics is indispensable. However, the conscious and systematic adoption of market-orientation strategy is critically relevant to the spirit of democracy. It will not only improve voters' satisfaction and help political parties attain their objectives; it fundamentally, helps to improve the electoral process and deepen democracy (Mensah, 2007; Girma, 2016; Ampah, 2019). From the analysis of 2019 and probably 2015 presidential elections in Nigeria, voters' satisfaction is very doubtful, that some political parties and candidates attain their objective(s) may be true; this is however at the expense of the electoral process and democratic development of the nation. For these to change, all forms of electoral malpractice must be eliminated. The electoral umpire must improve in its organisation and implementation of future elections. Government and non-governmental agencies must embark on massive orientation and education of eligible voters on their civic responsibility and conducts. Political

parties and politicians must improve their public reputation in order to build trust and engender the electorate's trust. A situation where only 18 percent of registered voters elects a President, not only diminishes the electoral process, it also speaks volume about the nature of democracy in Nigeria. The executive and legislative arms of the Nigerian government must sincerely review the electoral laws and also empower the necessary agencies of government to prosecute all electoral offenders. There must be strict adherence to the electoral laws and guidelines, particularly in the areas of election campaign finance and political party primaries. If and when these are done, and the electorate takes their prime position in the electoral market, political marketing will develop both in theory and practice.

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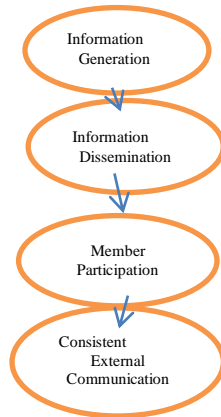


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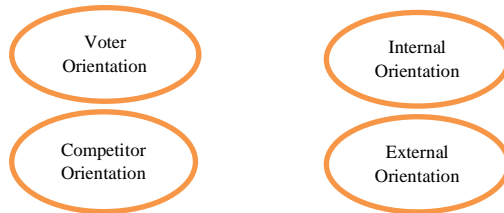
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**Figure 1: The Behavioural Chain**



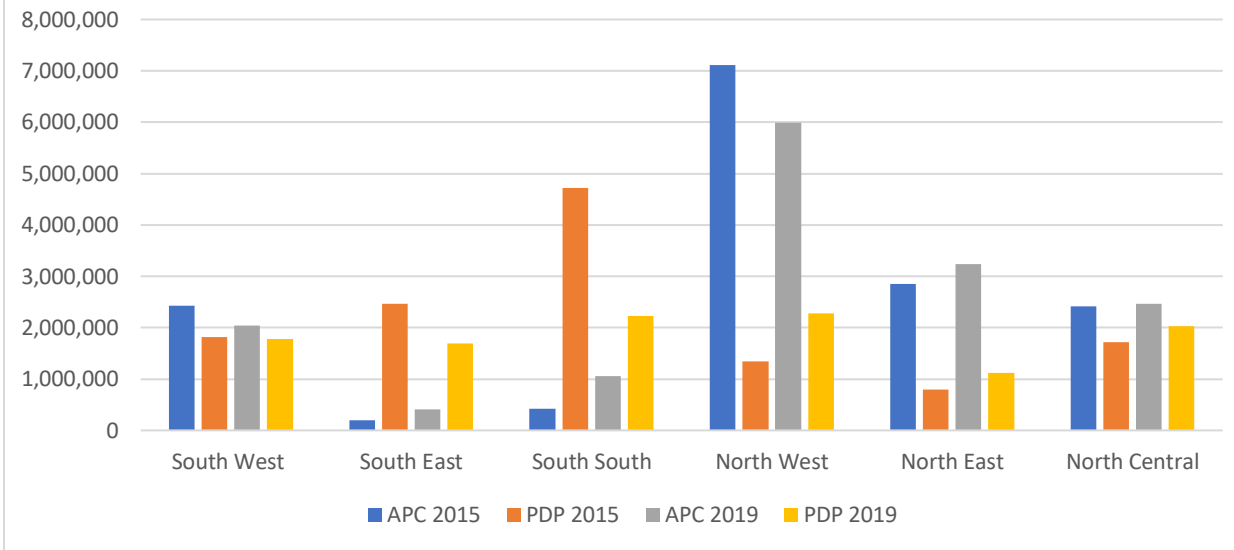
Source: Ormrod (2005:53).

**Figure 2: The Four Stakeholder Orientations**



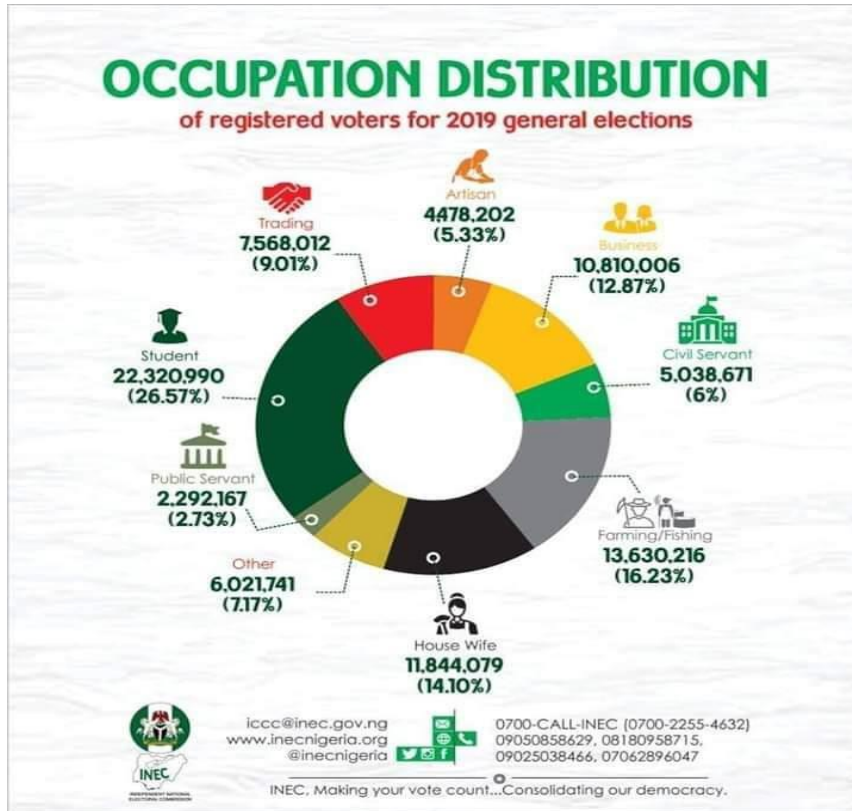
Source: Ormrod (2005:57).

**Figure 3 Bar Chart Showing 2015 and 2019 Presidential Election Results of APC & PDP by Geo-Political Zones**



Source: Authorfrom INEC Declared 2015 & 2019 Presidential Results

Figure 4 Occupational distribution of 2019 Registered voters



<sup>1</sup> The author was a guest political and social analyst on Television Continental TVC and Lagos State Television LTV during the 2019 elections.

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**Table 1. The marketing process for the product, sales, and market-oriented parties.**

<b>Stage</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>POP</b>	Product design	Communication	Campaign	Election	Delivery			
<b>SOP</b>	Product design	Market Intelligence	Communication	Campaign	Election	Delivery		
<b>MOP</b>	Market Intelligence	Product design	Product adjustment	Implementation	Communication	Campaign	Election	Delivery

**POP** - Product-Oriented Party

**SOP** - Sales-Oriented Party

**MOP** - Market-Oriented Party

**Source:** Lees-Marshment (2003:16).

**Table 2: The presidential electoral contest, contestants, results, and matters arising from the 2015 & 2019 elections.**

	Subject	2015	2019	Comparative analysis
1	Election Dates	28/03/15	23/02/19	The two elections (2015 and 2019) suffered postponement. In 2015, insecurity was adduced. For 2019, INEC cited logistical reasons for the postponement.
2	Registered Political Parties No of Contestants	26 11	91 73	In 2019, the number of registered political parties increased by 350%, and Presidential candidates increased by 663.6%. This created some level of confusion for the voters.
3	Total Registered voters	67,422,005	84,004,084	In 2019, INEC recorded an increase of 16.5million newly registered voters.
4	Total Valid Vote Cast	28,587,564	27,324,583	Despite an increase of 16.5 million voters, the total number of valid votes cast dropped by 1,2million in the 2019 election.
5	Voters' turnout (%)	43.6%	35.66%	A further drop in voters' turnout is noticed.
6	Incumbent (Candidate & Party)	Jonathan/PDP	APC/Buhari	Incumbent lost
7	Main Opposition (Candidate & Party)	APC/Buhari	Atiku/PDP	Incumbent won
8	Winner and Total vote	APC/15,424,921	APC/15,191,847	A drop in the total vote in 2019.
9	Runner-up and Total vote	PDP/12,853,162	PDP/11,262,978	A drop in the total vote in 2019.
10	Campaign Media Use	Traditional Broadcast and Print media played frontline roles, followed by Outdoor, Digital media and below the line	Digital media played the lead, followed by below the line media. Traditional media had minimal showing.	A strategic shift in media use is noticed in 2019. Unlike in 2015, when traditional media enjoyed more patronage, in 2019, the political parties and candidates focused more on digital media and below the line media.
11	Campaign Cost	4.9 Billion (Estimate)	No Clear figure. But very low compared to 2015.	Though no precise figures, for now, experts and observers agree that there is a fundamental drop-in campaign expenditure in 2019 compared to 2015
12	Electoral Litigation	None	One	PDP and its flag bearer challenged the declaration of APC candidate as the winner to the highest court in the land.
13	Election Violence and related deaths	106	626	A massive increase in 2019.



**Table 3: 2015 and 2019 Presidential Election Results of APC & PDP by Geo-Political Zones**

Geo-Political Zones	APC 2015	PDP 2015	APC 2019	PDP 2019
South West	2,433,193	1,821,416	2,036,450	1,776,670
South East	198,248	2,464,906	403,968	1,693,485
South South	418,590	4,714,725	1,051,396	2,233,232
North West	7,115,199	1,339,709	5,995,651	2,280,465
North East	2,848,678	796,580	3,238,783	1,116,873
North Central	2,411,013	1,715,818	2,465,599	2,023,769

Source: Author from INEC Declared 2015 & 2019 Presidential Results

**Table 4 To what extent was voting decision influenced by the following**

Statement	Nil		Very Great Extent		Little Extent		Not at all	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
Party Candidates	10	0.7	807	59.9	292	21.7	239	17.1
Party name and Logo	45	3.3	385	28.6	333	24.7	585	43.4
Party Slogan	40	3.0	379	28.1	301	22.3	628	46.6
Party Image/Behaviour	45	3.3	412	30.6	447	33.2	444	32.9
Culture and Religious Affiliation	55	4.1	173	12.8	358	26.6	762	56.5
Ethnic and communal relationship	50	3.7	234	17.4	419	31.1	645	47.8
Opinion Leader	50	3.7	272	20.2	489	36.3	537	39.8
Per Influence	60	4.5	149	11.1	401	29.7	738	54.7
Money and Gift	55	4.1	76	5.6	198	14.7	1019	75.6
Political Campaign	45	3.3	407	30.2	437	32.4	459	34.1
Media Campaign	50	3.7	409	30.3	425	31.5	464	34.4
Party and Candidates social and Community projects/Programmes	40	3.0	581	43.1	429	31.8	298	22.1
Party Manifesto	45	3.3	596	44.2	387	28.7	320	23.7
Party/candidates previous performance	30	2.2	725	53.8	299	22.2	294	21.8

Source: Adapted from Akinola (2017:131)