

Influence of Political Campaign Messages on Voter's Choice: a Study of the Jonathan-Buhari
2015 Presidential Campaigns

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In recent years, Ad political campaign messages have increasingly become negative with "smear and scare tactics" being employed by political parties in their desperation to win elections. Political parties and their flag bearers readily engage in spewing out hate campaign into the airwaves. They complain incessantly about the fairness of the comments made about them, while their opponents are doing the same. Considerable evidence suggests that the negativity associated with contemporary political campaigns has reduced the persuasiveness of such messages and ultimately its credibility and influence on voters. It is against this backdrop that this study x-rays the influence of political campaign messages on voters' choice, using the 2015 presidential contest between Jonathan-Buhari as a case study. Employing the survey research method, the researcher generated data using the questionnaire and in-depth interview. Also, adopting the multi-stage sampling procedure, the researcher used the National Statistical Service of Australia to arrive at a sample size of 385. The data generated were analyzed using 16.0, Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and the information gotten were presented in simple table frequencies and percentages. The study found among other things that, the Ad political campaign messages of the two major political parties APC and PDP had only minimal influence on voters' choice of candidate at the polls. Additionally, given that the campaigns were hardly issue-based but filled with hate messages, the persuasiveness of such messages were grossly reduced thus their influence on voters. In view of this, the researcher recommended that political parties and their candidates should as a matter of urgency, make hast to rebuild trust and credibility with the electorate and make central to their campaign messages issues of public policy interest instead of dwelling on negativities. It is only then that their Ad campaign messages can as expected exert maximal influence on voters.