

POLITICAL MARKETING ADVERTISING AND CANDIDATE MARKETABILITY IN RIVERS STATE.

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Abstract: Political marketing advertising has become a central feature of modern electoral campaigns, serving as a strategic communication tool through which political actors seek to attract public attention and shape voter perceptions. This study examined the relationship between political marketing advertising and candidate marketability in Rivers State, Nigeria, with particular emphasis on three indicators: name recognition, favourability, and electoral viability. A quantitative research approach was employed using a descriptive survey design to collect data from registered voters across selected local government areas in the state. Data were gathered through a structured questionnaire and analysed using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) with the support of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The results indicated a very strong and statistically significant relationship between in political marketing advertising and candidate name recognition ($r = 0.909$, $p < 0.05$). A similarly strong positive relationship was found between political marketing advertising and candidate favourability ($r = 0.873$, $p < 0.05$). In contrast, the relationship between political advertising and electoral viability was positive but moderate ($r = 0.528$, $p < 0.05$). These findings suggest that while political marketing advertising substantially enhances candidate visibility and contributes to the formation of favourable voter perceptions, its influence on perceived electoral competitiveness is comparatively limited and mediated by other political marketing and contextual factors. The study concludes that political marketing advertising remains an important component of campaign strategy in Rivers State, but its effectiveness is maximised when integrated with broader political mobilisation and organisational efforts.

Keywords: *Political marketing advertising; candidate marketability; name recognition; voter favourability; electoral viability.*

I. Introduction

In modern democratic contexts, electoral success depends not only on the articulation of policies or party affiliation but also on a candidate's ability to capture public attention and win voter confidence. This ability is often encapsulated in the concept of candidate marketability, which reflects the extent to which a political actor can become visible, attractive, and persuasive to the electorate. In highly competitive political settings such as Rivers State, where multiple actors vie for limited political offices, the capacity of a candidate to be recognized, liked, and perceived as viable becomes particularly significant. Success in elections increasingly hinges on strategic communication, effective branding, and the management of public perception.

Candidate marketability is central to the electoral process because it directly influences voter behaviour. The construct captures how voters become aware of candidates, form positive evaluations, and assess their likelihood of winning. Its components *name recognition*, *favourability*, and *electoral viability*, interact in complex ways. Recognition without a favourable perception can lead to mere visibility without support, while high favourability may fail to translate into votes if the

candidate remains unknown or perceived as unlikely to win. In essence, candidate marketability shapes the lens through which the electorate evaluates contenders and makes decisions (Gutiérrez-Rodríguez, 2023).

The significance of candidate marketability lies in its impact on voter choice, particularly in environments where electoral information is limited or unevenly distributed. In such contexts, voters rely on heuristic cues such as familiarity with a candidate's name or positive impressions formed through media exposure to guide decision-making (Turner et al., 2020). A candidate who achieves higher visibility and resonates positively with the electorate is more likely to secure votes, particularly when ideological differences among contenders are subtle or poorly communicated.

Research within the Nigerian context highlights the influence of political marketing on electoral behaviour. Uwalaka and Nwala (2022) demonstrate that political marketing advertising significantly shapes voter perceptions in the South-South region, affecting both candidate recognition and preferences. Empirical evidence from Rivers State indicates that exposure to campaign messages can influence voter choices, though its impact is moderated by entrenched socio-political factors, such as ethnic loyalty and political godfatherism (Innocent & Michael, 2025). These observations underscore the necessity of strategically managing a candidate's public image to enhance electoral competitiveness.

Effectively marketing political candidates presents several challenges. First, media environments are fragmented, with audiences dispersed across television, radio, digital platforms, and grassroots networks. Campaigns must strategically allocate resources to reach intended voter segments effectively (Alade et al., 2024). Second, voter skepticism poses a significant hurdle. Many citizens perceive political advertising as exaggerated or manipulative, which can diminish the persuasive power of campaigns (Ankeli, 2023). Third, internal party dynamics and funding disparities create structural barriers. Wealthier candidates can saturate media spaces, while underfunded candidates struggle to maintain visibility. Finally, negative campaigning, characterized by attacks on opponents rather than promotion of one's own strengths, can erode public trust and complicate efforts to build a coherent, positive candidate brand.

Political marketing advertising is a key instrument in enhancing candidate marketability. It encompasses planned communication strategies aimed at influencing public attitudes, promoting candidate visibility, and mobilizing electoral support. Such advertising is delivered through traditional mass media (radio, television, print) and digital channels (social media, email campaigns, online videos). In Nigeria, political advertising plays a crucial role in shaping both recognition and voter perceptions, although its effectiveness is influenced by voters' pre-existing political inclinations and the sociocultural context (Alade et al., 2024). In Rivers State, political branding in advertisements has sometimes been inconsistent, with messages lacking clarity and coherence. This inconsistency limits the effectiveness of campaigns in building favourable perceptions among voters (Innocent & Michael, 2025). Consequently, while political advertising is theoretically linked to candidate marketability, its practical implementation often determines the strength and durability of that relationship.

Political marketing advertising serves two key functions: *enhancing visibility* and *shaping evaluations*. Traditional media remain critical for reaching broad audiences, whereas digital platforms allow campaigns to target specific demographics with tailored messaging. When deployed effectively, these strategies reinforce name recognition, foster favourability, and communicate electoral viability. However, empirical evidence on the direct effects of advertising on candidate evaluation remains mixed, suggesting that the relationship is complex and context-dependent rather than straightforward (Broockman & Green, 2014).

Despite extensive research on political communication and campaign strategies, there is a notable gap in understanding the relationship between political advertising and candidate marketability in sub-national African contexts, especially in Rivers State. Existing studies often examine voter behaviour in general or focus on turnout, without explicitly linking advertising exposure to measurable marketability outcomes such as recognition, favourability, or perceived viability.

Additionally, while digital political marketing is rapidly evolving globally, its influence on candidate marketability in Nigerian elections remains underexplored. Most studies rely on theoretical assumptions or data from other regions, limiting their applicability to Rivers State's unique political, social, and media landscape. This gap underscores the need for context-specific research that investigates how advertising strategies influence voter perceptions of candidates in emerging democratic settings.

This study addresses these gaps by investigating how political marketing advertising shapes candidate marketability in Rivers State, with particular attention to the three key measures: name recognition, favourability, and electoral viability. Unlike prior research that predominantly offers descriptive accounts of advertising prevalence, this study examines the associational and potential causal relationships between advertising exposure and voter perceptions of candidate appeal. By situating the research within the socio-political realities of Rivers State, the study offers insights into the mechanisms through which advertising influences electoral competitiveness. It contributes to scholarship on political marketing in emerging democracies and provides practical guidance for campaign practitioners seeking to optimize candidate branding strategies. Ultimately, this research enhances understanding of the complex interplay between communication, perception, and electoral success in highly competitive political environments.

Purpose and Objectives of the Study

The purpose of this study is to ascertain the relationship between political marketing advertising and candidate marketability in Rivers State, Nigeria. These objectives will be met by this paper;

- i. Determine the relationship between political marketing advertising and candidate name recognition in Rivers State, Nigeria.
- ii. Examine the relationship between political marketing advertising and candidate favourability in Rivers State, Nigeria.
- iii. Assess the relationship between political marketing advertising and candidate electoral viability in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated specifically for this study:

H_{o1} - There is no significant relationship between political marketing advertising and candidate name recognition in Rivers State, Nigeria.

H_{o2} - There is no significant relationship between political marketing advertising and candidate favourability in Rivers State, Nigeria.

H_{o3} - There is no significant relationship between political marketing advertising and candidate electoral viability in Rivers State, Nigeria.

II. Literature Review

Theoretical Review: Agenda-Setting Theory

Agenda-setting theory provides a critical framework for understanding how media influence public perception by shaping the prominence of issues, topics, or individuals in the collective consciousness. Initially articulated by McCombs and Shaw during the 1968 U.S. presidential election, the theory posits that the media do not simply reflect reality; they guide public attention by emphasizing certain subjects over others, thereby influencing what people consider important (Turner et al., 2020). This mechanism is central to political communication because voters often rely on media cues to prioritize information in decision-making processes, particularly in environments where comprehensive political knowledge is limited (Turner et al., 2020; Tokeaw, 2025).

An extension of the theory, known as second-level agenda setting, focuses on the attributes and framing of issues or individuals. Beyond determining what people think about, it shapes how they think about it by highlighting particular qualities, characteristics, or perspectives (Turner et al., 2020). In electoral contexts, this attribute-focused dimension is especially relevant. Political

advertising functions as a strategic tool that not only increases voter awareness of candidates but also emphasizes specific attributes such as leadership capability, trustworthiness, or policy competence thereby influencing evaluations of candidate favourability and viability (Golan et al., 2007).

In contemporary politics, agenda-setting extends into the digital arena, where social media and online platforms allow candidates and parties to actively contribute to the public agenda. Here, political advertising serves to elevate both candidate visibility and the perceived importance of their attributes, effectively shaping the components of marketability: name recognition, positive perception, and perceived electoral viability (Tokeaw, 2025; Ibrahim & Adesoji, 2025). By determining which issues or qualities receive sustained emphasis, agenda-setting theory anchors the current study by offering a lens to examine how strategically designed advertisements can influence voter perceptions and electoral competitiveness in Rivers State. Agenda-setting theory provides both a conceptual and practical foundation for analyzing the interplay between political advertising and candidate marketability, emphasizing the role of media and messaging in shaping public priorities and candidate evaluations.

Conceptual Review

Political Marketing Advertising

Political marketing advertising is widely recognised as a purpose-driven form of media communication employed by political actors to shape public perceptions and influence decision-making during electoral and policy contests. In its simplest interpretation, political advertising comprises paid promotional content created by parties, candidates, or issue advocates to persuade voters and mobilise support, often harnessing visual, verbal, and digital messaging strategies (Aydın, 2025). Contemporary scholars emphasise the intentionality and financial investment inherent in these campaigns, underscoring that such advertisements are distinct from organic discussions and unpaid political discourse precisely because they are designed, funded, and strategically deployed to affect political outcomes (Aydın, 2025; Saeed & Ali, 2025).

Researchers also highlight that digital platforms have complicated the boundaries of political advertising. Social media's algorithmic delivery systems can systematically alter which audiences see which ads, potentially skewing exposure in ways that influence campaign effectiveness and democratic equity (Bär et al., 2023). These dynamics matter because they affect not only *who* hears campaign messages, but *how* those messages are interpreted and acted upon by different demographic groups. For example, studies tracking social media political ads reveal variance in algorithmic reach and response, suggesting that automated delivery mechanisms can privilege certain political messages over others (Bär et al., 2023). Complementary research on online political campaigning shows that audience targeting can extend beyond straightforward demographic traits, complicating traditional regulatory frameworks and raising ethical concerns about oversight and transparency (Zhu, Dommett, & Stafford, 2025).

Empirical work further examines the impacts of political advertising on voter perceptions and engagement. Investigations into social media campaigns indicate that targeted political content can shape political consciousness, particularly among younger generations, by influencing information intake and opinion formation (Saeed & Ali, 2025). Collectively, this body of literature underscores that political advertising remains a dynamic and evolving field of inquiry, shaped by technological change, regulatory challenges, and ongoing debates about its effects on democratic processes.

Candidate Marketability

The concept of candidate marketability has become increasingly central to understanding political competition in contemporary democracies. Broadly, candidate marketability refers to the extent to which a political contender can attract voter support through the deliberate presentation of personal attributes, public image, and strategic communication (Moslehpour, Shalehah, & Pham, 2026). Rooted in political marketing theory, this notion conceptualizes candidates as "products" whose

success depends on their ability to resonate with the electorate, using tools such as branding, messaging, and media engagement to cultivate recognition and appeal (Kocaman & Coşgun, 2024). Key dimensions of marketability include visibility, perceived competence, charisma, and the alignment of personal traits with voter expectations, all of which shape how voters evaluate candidates' electability.

Scholars offer diverse perspectives on the mechanisms underlying candidate marketability. Some highlight the importance of brand personality traits—such as credibility, dynamism, and sincerity—as drivers of voter perception and preference, noting that candidates who effectively project these qualities are generally seen as more attractive in competitive elections (Okeke, Ekharefo, & Asemah, 2026). Other studies emphasize the interaction between candidate characteristics and voter heuristics, demonstrating that cues such as ideology, gender, and public recognition influence assessments of candidate viability and ultimately voting behavior (Hassell, & Visalvanich, 2024). This body of work underscores that marketability is not solely a product of marketing strategies but also emerges from the interplay between candidate attributes and voter psychology.

Empirical investigations further explore the impact of strategic campaign practices on electoral outcomes. Evidence from social media campaigns and targeted messaging indicates that enhanced candidate branding and communication strategies can strengthen voter engagement, increase visibility, and support alignment with voter preferences (Vargas-Merino et al., 2025). Collectively, contemporary research positions candidate marketability as a multidimensional construct shaped by branding, strategic communication, and voter perception, highlighting its critical role in shaping electoral success in modern political landscapes.

Name Recognition

Name recognition is commonly defined as the degree to which voters are aware of a political candidate's identity prior to or during an election. Scholars argue that familiarity with a candidate serves as a critical heuristic in decision-making, particularly in contexts characterized by low-information voters (Katz & Lazarsfeld, 2021). In Nigeria, explicit definitions remain scarce, but studies examining political communication implicitly address this concept. Research on the 2023 presidential campaigns highlighted how candidates utilized diverse media channels to ensure that their identities and messages were widely known, thereby enhancing visibility and electoral salience (Olaolu & Adeola, 2025).

Empirical findings indicate that exposure through both traditional and digital media significantly improves voter awareness. For instance, Adunola (2022) found that voters in Etsako West Local Government Area were more likely to recognize candidates who received higher media coverage, highlighting the relationship between media penetration and name recognition. Similarly, Chiadika (2025) demonstrated that social media platforms played an increasing role in expanding candidate visibility, engaging younger and urban voters, and influencing perceptions of political legitimacy.

Favourability

Favourability captures voters' evaluations of candidates in terms of likability, trustworthiness, and alignment with personal or societal values. While few Nigerian studies provide precise definitions, research on political party branding offers relevant insights. Opara (2022) demonstrated that candidates affiliated with parties possessing strong brand credibility were more likely to be viewed favourably by voters. This suggests that favourability is shaped by a combination of individual candidate traits and party reputation.

Campaign communications also play a pivotal role in shaping positive voter evaluations. Nigerian scholars note that effective campaigns often emphasize personal narratives, ideological positioning, and policy promises to cultivate favourable perceptions (Olaolu & Adeola, 2025). Achang (2022) further observed that persuasive political messaging enhances voters' positive attitudes toward candidates, reinforcing the view that favourability is not merely an inherent quality but a construct influenced by repeated exposure to credible and relatable information.

Electoral Viability

Electoral viability refers to a candidate's perceived potential to win an election, based on strategic positioning, organizational support, and competitiveness. Nigerian research emphasizes that viability depends on both structural factors, such as party strength and geographical support, and voter perceptions of a candidate's capacity to secure victory. Studies from the 2023 elections indicate that candidates with robust party backing, extensive campaign outreach, and significant media visibility were consistently regarded as viable contenders (Madukpe et al., 2025).

Further, electoral viability is influenced by socio-political dynamics such as ethnicity, regional affiliation, and socioeconomic conditions. Voters often interpret a candidate's perceived ability to address structural challenges as indicative of their likelihood of success, which in turn shapes electoral behaviour (Madukpe et al., 2025). Incumbency and prior electoral performance also reinforce perceptions of viability, demonstrating that the construct is both dynamic and context-dependent.

Empirical Review

A key contribution in this domain is the work of Nzezele and Willie (2025), which explored the influence of political marketing endorsements on voters in the South-South geopolitical zone. Using a purposive sample survey, the authors assessed relationships between endorsements operationalized as political ad endorsements and voters' evaluations of candidate competence and overall acceptability. Statistical analysis using correlation techniques revealed that endorsements significantly correlated with enhanced public perception of candidates' electability and image. The authors concluded that endorsements embedded in political marketing strategies serve as a potent mechanism for improving candidate visibility and acceptability among electorates (Nzezele & Willie, 2025).

In a complementary study focused on digital platforms, Ade-Johnson (2025) investigated the impact of social media advertising on voter preferences during the 2024 governorship election in Edo State. Through systematic survey data gathered from registered voters, the research identified that frequent exposure to tailored political advertisements on social networks significantly shaped voter choice. Beyond simple exposure, the findings pointed to a positive association between social media engagement with campaign ads and voters' inclination toward specific candidates. However, Ade-Johnson also cautioned that aggressive political advertising on social media platforms risked intensifying social and ethnic divides, suggesting a dual role of digital ads in voter mobilisation and societal fragmentation (Ade-Johnson, 2025).

The influence of traditional media remains critical in the literature. Alade, Ifedolapo, Ayinde, and Odion (2024) examined political radio advertising during the 2022 Osun State gubernatorial election, focusing on how radio campaigns affected the electoral choices of nurses and civil servants. Their structured questionnaire revealed that although radio remained a widely consumed medium for political ads, its capacity to shift voter intent was less pronounced than anticipated. The results indicated that while respondents recognised and recalled radio political advertisements, this awareness did not consistently translate into significant changes in favourability or voting behaviour. This outcome highlights the nuanced role of radio advertising in fostering candidate awareness but not necessarily influencing electoral decisions directly (Alade et al., 2024).

Ehio, Akani and Damian-Okoro (2024) investigated political marketing and voting behaviour of electorates in Rivers State. Investigation revealed that political marketing substantially contributes to the voting decision made by electorates in River State. The study concludes that political marketing significantly relates to the voting behaviour of electorates in Rivers State.

Extending beyond exposure effects, Ogba and Ijeh (2026) investigated the efficacy of celebrity endorsements in political advertisements during local elections in Ughelli, Delta State. Using cross-sectional survey data, the study explored how celebrity-linked political ads affected public perceptions of candidates. Respondents reported high recognition of candidates presented alongside

celebrities; however, the presence of celebrity endorsements did not automatically enhance trust or voting intention. Instead, the results suggested that public scepticism about celebrities' motivations could dilute the persuasive effect of these endorsements, indicating that mere visibility enhancement does not always translate into favourability or support at the polls (Ogba & Ijeh, 2026).

Investigations into content strategy deepen understanding of how messaging quality shapes marketability. Innocent and Michael (2025) conducted a content analysis of campaign commercials from the 2023 Rivers State governorship race, assessing thematic and branding patterns. Their analysis found that while commercials often attempted to project candidate competence and community alignment, many lacked cohesive brand messaging that could sustain clear public associations. The authors argued that ineffective message framing could weaken campaign impact, suggesting that branding coherence is a critical dimension of political advertising that supports candidate recall and voter favourability (Innocent & Michael, 2025).

Linguistic framing and cultural resonance emerge as another important area of study. Agbasimelo and Ignatius (2024) examined how multilingual political slogans used in the 2023 Labour Party campaign influenced voter awareness and message retention. Survey results indicated that exposure to campaign messaging delivered in multiple languages, including Nigerian Pidgin and regional tongues, improved recall and recognition among diverse voter segments. Importantly, the study highlighted that linguistic inclusivity functions not only to increase visibility but also to enrich emotional connection with messages, a factor that can enhance candidate favourability when paired with authenticity and credible content (Agbasimelo & Ignatius, 2024).

The literature also addresses the valence of political advertising. Nwadiuto (2025) explored the effects of negative political advertising during the 2023 General Election, focusing on how such messaging shaped perceptions of candidate competence. Survey data indicated that negative ads disseminated on social and digital platforms were significantly associated with diminished perceptions of targeted candidates' capability. This suggests that the tone of advertising positive or negative is instrumental in shaping voter attitudes and that negative advertising, while attention-grabbing, can reduce overall candidate favourability and recalibrate perceptions of electoral viability (Nwadiuto, 2025).

Complementary to these individual studies, broader social media research by Arowolo and Ogande (2024) examined political mobilisation on platforms like Facebook during the 2023 presidential campaign. Their quantitative approach revealed that political messages encountered on social media not only increased candidate visibility but also functioned as mobilisation cues that prompted political participation. Respondents reported that online engagement with political content influenced their informational environment, helping shape views about candidate suitability and strengthening indicators of electoral consideration. The authors concluded that digital platforms are significant arenas for constructing candidate image and engaging the electorate, particularly among younger, more connected voter groups (Arowolo & Ogande, 2024).

Collectively, these empirical investigations paint a nuanced picture: political advertising in Nigeria is a multifaceted phenomenon with differential impacts on name recognition, favourability, and electoral viability. While political ads consistently enhance visibility and public awareness of candidates, their impact on favourable evaluation and voting behaviour is mediated by message quality, media channel, cultural resonance, and voter interpretation. Digital media, particularly social platforms, have emerged as powerful vectors for exposure and mobilisation, yet they also introduce risks such as misinformation and social fragmentation. Traditional media, such as radio, retains relevance but may exert more moderate persuasive effects relative to digital counterparts.

III. Research Methodology

This study employs a quantitative research approach to investigate the influence of political advertising on candidate marketability in Rivers State. Grounded in empirical traditions within political communication research, the methodology enables systematic measurement and analysis of voter responses to political marketing advertisements in relation to name recognition,

favourability, and electoral viability. A descriptive survey design was adopted for this study because it facilitates the collection of data that describe the characteristics and perceptions of a large population, particularly voters' responses to political advertising messages (Agbasimelo & Ignatius, 2024; Arowolo & Ogande, 2024). This design is appropriate for capturing real-world voter attitudes and behaviours during election periods, enabling the researcher to quantify patterns of exposure to political marketing advertising and its associations with candidate marketability. The descriptive survey is widely used in Nigerian communication research to reveal relationships between media exposure and audience response.

The target population comprises registered adult voters residing in Rivers State who were eligible to participate in the most recent governorship election cycle. According to INEC statistics, Rivers State has a substantial number of registered voters (projected over several million); this large population ensures diversity across age, gender, education, and locality, allowing for robust socio-demographic representation in the study sample. A multistage sampling technique was used to ensure that the sample is representative of the entire State. First, the State was stratified into its major senatorial zones. Second, local government areas (LGAs) were randomly selected within each zone. Finally, voters within selected LGAs were chosen using purposive sampling, which reduces selection challenges and is suitable for known heterogeneous populations.

From each of the LGAs, a total of 20 respondents were sampled. This amounts to 460 respondents, as the State is made up of 23 LGAs. Therefore, the sample size for this is 460 which is a reasonable level of precision and statistical power, consistent with previous survey-based studies in Nigerian electoral research. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire comprised closed-ended items on:

1. Exposure to political advertising across media (radio, TV, social media).
2. Name recognition, operationally defined as voters' ability to recall candidate names without prompts.
3. Favourability, measured by attitudinal scales assessing voters' positive or negative impressions of candidates.
4. Electoral viability, assessed through participants' likelihood of voting for specific candidates based on advertising exposure.

Responses were captured using Likert-type scales (e.g., 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree) to allow for standardized measurement and statistical analysis.

To ensure construct validity, the questionnaire was adapted from instruments used in previous Nigerian political advertising and media studies, ensuring alignment with relevant theoretical constructs such as political marketing effects (Agbasimelo & Ignatius, 2024). Expert review by academic scholars in mass communication and political science was conducted to confirm face and content validity, ensuring that items accurately reflect the intended constructs. A pilot test was administered with 30 respondents outside the main sample to assess internal consistency. Cronbach's alpha was calculated for multi-item scales to determine reliability; a threshold of 0.70 was adopted for acceptable reliability, consistent with standard research practice (Innocent & Michael, 2025).

Data collection was conducted in the weeks immediately following the most recent election cycle. Trained research assistants administered the questionnaire face-to-face in public spaces such as market areas, community centres, and polling unit vicinities to facilitate high response rates. Collected data were coded and analysed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Inferential statistics, the Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis will be conducted to examine relationships between political advertising exposure and dependent variables (name recognition, favourability, electoral viability). The significance level was set at $p < .05$ to determine statistical significance. Results were interpreted within the political communication theoretical framework and discussed in the context of Nigerian electoral dynamics.

IV. DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

Decision rule: the Table 1 shows the direction and strength of the relationships.

Table 1: Description on Range of correlation Pearson values and the corresponding level of association

Range of Pearson with positive and negative sign values	Strength of Association
± 0.80 – 0.99	Very Strong
± 0.60 – 0.79	Strong
± 0.40 – 0.59	Moderate
± 0.20 – 0.39	Weak
± 0.00 – 0.19	Very Weak

Source: Adopted from Bryman & Bell, 2003

Significance Level (Sig. or p-value): Indicates whether the correlation is statistically significant. If $p < 0.05$, the correlation is significant, meaning there is strong evidence of an association between the variables. If $p > 0.05$, the correlation is not statistically significant, suggesting that any observed relationship may be due to chance.

Table 2: Correlations for political advertising and candidate marketability

		Advert	Recognition	Favourability	Viability
Advert	Pearson Correlation	1	.909**	.873**	.528**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000
	N	460	460	460	460
Recognition	Pearson Correlation	.909**	1	.744**	.526**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000
	N	460	460	460	460
Favourability	Pearson Correlation	.873**	.744**	1	.542**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000
	N	460	460	460	460
Viability	Pearson Correlation	.528**	.526**	.542**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	
	N	460	460	460	460

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) analysis was conducted to determine the relationship between political advertising and the key dimensions of candidate marketability, namely name recognition, favourability, and electoral viability among voters in Rivers State.

Hypothesis 1: Political Marketing Advertising and Name Recognition

The correlation analysis revealed a strong positive relationship between political marketing advertising and candidate name recognition ($r = 0.909$, $p = 0.000$). The correlation coefficient of 0.909 indicates a very high degree of association, suggesting that increased exposure to political marketing advertising significantly enhances voters' ability to recognise and recall candidates' names. The p-value of 0.000, which is less than the conventional significance level of 0.05, indicates that the relationship is statistically significant. This means that the likelihood that this relationship occurred by chance is extremely low.

The result implies that political advertisements play a crucial role in increasing the visibility of candidates and improving their recognition among voters in Rivers State. In other words, the more voters are exposed to campaign advertisements across media platforms, the more familiar they become with the candidates. Consequently, the null hypothesis stating that political marketing advertising has no significant relationship with candidate name recognition is rejected, while the alternative hypothesis is accepted.

Hypothesis 2: Political Marketing Advertising and Candidate Favourability

The results further show a strong positive correlation between political marketing advertising and candidate favourability ($r = 0.873$, $p = 0.000$). The correlation coefficient of 0.873 indicates a high level of association, meaning that political marketing advertising significantly influences how positively voters perceive political candidates. The significance value of 0.000 ($p < 0.05$) confirms that the relationship is statistically significant.

This finding suggests that political advertising not only increases awareness but also shapes voters' attitudes and impressions of candidates. Effective campaign messages may highlight candidates' competence, personality, and policy proposals, thereby fostering favourable perceptions among the electorate. As a result, the null hypothesis that political advertising has no significant relationship with candidate favourability is rejected, indicating that political marketing advertising contributes substantially to improving voters' positive evaluations of candidates.

Hypothesis 3: Political Marketing Advertising and Electoral Viability

The analysis also examined the relationship between political marketing advertising and candidate electoral viability. The results indicate a moderate positive correlation between the two variables ($r = 0.528$, $p = 0.000$). Although the correlation coefficient is lower compared with those of name recognition and favourability, the value of 0.528 still reflects a meaningful positive relationship. The significance value of 0.000 confirms that the relationship is statistically significant at the 0.05 level. This result implies that political marketing advertising contributes to enhancing the perceived electoral strength or competitiveness of candidates among voters. However, the moderate magnitude of the correlation suggests that electoral viability may also be influenced by other factors such as party affiliation, candidate reputation, political ideology, and socio-economic considerations. Therefore, while political marketing advertising plays a role in shaping perceptions of a candidate's chances of winning an election, it is not the sole determinant of electoral success.

These findings indicate that political advertising is a critical communication strategy for improving candidate visibility and shaping voter perceptions in Rivers State. However, while advertising strongly enhances recognition and favourability, its effect on electoral viability appears comparatively moderate, suggesting that other political and contextual factors also contribute to determining electoral outcomes.

Discussion of Findings

The present study explored the relationship between political marketing advertising and candidate marketability in Rivers State, with particular emphasis on name recognition, favourability, and electoral viability. The empirical results revealed statistically significant positive associations between political advertising and all three indicators of candidate marketability. These outcomes reinforce the growing body of research in political communication that identifies campaign advertising as a crucial instrument for shaping voter awareness and perception within democratic electoral processes.

Political Marketing Advertising and Name Recognition

One of the central findings of the study is the very strong positive relationship between political marketing advertising and candidate name recognition ($r = 0.909$, $p < 0.05$). This result indicates that voters who are more frequently exposed to political advertisements are significantly more likely to recognise and recall the names of candidates. The implication is that campaign advertising functions as an important visibility mechanism that introduces candidates to the electorate and reinforces their presence in the political information environment.

This finding corresponds with the argument of Asemah, Gujbawu, Ekharefo, and Okpanachi (2022) that media exposure plays a critical role in expanding public awareness of political actors and campaign messages. According to these authors, political advertising ensures repeated exposure to candidate identities and campaign narratives, which increases the probability that voters will remember them during electoral contests.

Similarly, Agbasimelo and Ignatius (2024) report that multilingual political campaign messages used during the 2023 Nigerian elections improved voters' recall of candidates and political parties. Their study demonstrated that repeated exposure to campaign advertisements across different linguistic platforms enhances the memorability of political actors among diverse voter groups. In the same vein, Innocent and Michael (2025) found that political campaign commercials during the Rivers State governorship election were primarily structured to build candidate recognition and strengthen political branding.

Within the political landscape of Rivers State, where several candidates often compete for voter attention, the importance of name recognition cannot be overstated. Political marketing advertising distributed through radio, television, outdoor media, and social networking platforms ensures that candidates maintain a consistent presence in public discourse. The strong correlation observed in this study, therefore, suggests that political marketing advertising is particularly effective in establishing candidate visibility and public familiarity.

Political Marketing, Advertising and Candidate Favourability

The study also identified a strong positive relationship between political marketing advertising and candidate favourability ($r = 0.873$, $p < 0.05$). This indicates that political advertisements contribute not only to public awareness but also to the formation of favourable attitudes toward political candidates. In other words, advertising appears to influence how voters evaluate the character, competence, and leadership qualities of candidates.

This finding aligns with the position of Opeibi (2020), who maintains that political communication strategies are designed to influence voters' psychological and emotional responses to candidates. Campaign advertisements frequently highlight leadership achievements, policy proposals, and personal attributes intended to create positive impressions among the electorate.

In addition, Arowolo and Ogande (2024) found that exposure to political campaign messages on digital platforms during the 2023 Nigerian presidential election had a measurable influence on voter attitudes. Their study revealed that social media political advertising played a significant role in shaping public perceptions and reinforcing favourable impressions of certain candidates.

A comparable conclusion was reached by Ehio and Willie (2025), whose research on political marketing endorsements in Nigeria's South-South region demonstrated that campaign messaging strategies positively affect voters' perception of candidate competence and credibility. According to their findings, endorsement-driven advertising enhances voters' emotional connection to candidates and strengthens perceptions of political legitimacy.

In Rivers State, where political competition is often shaped by intense public scrutiny and strong partisan alignment, favourable public perception can significantly affect candidate support. Political marketing advertising offers candidates an opportunity to frame their leadership profile and communicate policy priorities in ways that resonate with the electorate. Consequently, the strong correlation found in this study confirms that political marketing advertising plays a substantial role in shaping voters' positive evaluations of political candidates.

Political Marketing, Advertising and Electoral Viability

The study further revealed a moderate but statistically significant relationship between political marketing advertising and electoral viability ($r = 0.528$, $p < 0.05$). Although the association is positive, it is noticeably weaker than those observed for name recognition and favourability. This suggests that while political marketing advertising contributes to perceptions of a candidate's competitiveness, it is not the only determinant of electoral success.

This finding supports the conclusions of Alade, Ifedolapo, Ayinde, and Odion (2024), who observed that political radio advertisements increased awareness of candidates but exerted only a moderate influence on voters' final electoral choices. Their study emphasised that voting decisions are shaped by multiple variables, including party affiliation, ethnic identity, and economic considerations.

Likewise, Nwadiuto (2025) argues that although political advertising can influence voters' perception of candidate competence and electability, its impact on election outcomes depends heavily on broader political and institutional factors such as party structures, campaign organisation, and public trust in political actors.

Further insight is provided by Innocent and Michael (2025), who contend that political advertising contributes to candidate branding and public awareness but must be complemented by effective grassroots mobilisation and organisational support to translate visibility into electoral victory. This perspective helps explain the moderate level of association between advertising exposure and perceived electoral viability observed in this study.

The political environment in Rivers State is characterised by complex dynamics that include party dominance, political alliances, incumbency advantages, and strong grassroots networks. These contextual factors often interact with communication strategies to shape electoral outcomes. As a result, while political advertising enhances candidate visibility and influences voter perceptions, electoral viability is ultimately determined by a broader set of political and socio-institutional factors.

V. Conclusion and Recommendations

Conclusion

This study investigated the relationship between political marketing advertising and candidate marketability in Rivers State, focusing specifically on name recognition, favourability, and electoral viability as key indicators of marketability. The findings indicate that political marketing advertising plays an important role in shaping how candidates are perceived and evaluated by the electorate. The statistical results revealed strong and statistically significant relationships between political marketing advertising and both name recognition and candidate favourability, while the relationship between political marketing advertising and electoral viability was positive but comparatively moderate.

The strong association between political marketing advertising and name recognition suggests that campaign advertisements remain a highly effective mechanism for increasing public awareness of political candidates. Regular exposure to political messages across media channels—such as radio, television, outdoor advertising, and digital platforms—helps ensure that candidates remain visible within the broader political communication environment. This visibility increases the likelihood that voters will recognise and recall candidates when making electoral decisions.

The study also established that political marketing advertising contributes meaningfully to the development of favourable voter perceptions. Campaign messages that emphasise leadership qualities, policy proposals, and personal credibility can shape the way voters evaluate candidates. In this respect, political marketing advertising functions not only as a channel for disseminating information but also as a persuasive communication tool capable of influencing voters' attitudes and impressions.

However, the relatively moderate relationship observed between political marketing advertising and electoral viability indicates that media exposure alone does not guarantee electoral success. Electoral competitiveness in Rivers State appears to be influenced by a wider set of political factors, including party structures, grassroots mobilisation, alliances within the political system, and the broader socio-political context. Consequently, while political marketing advertising can strengthen candidate visibility and shape public perception, its effectiveness in determining electoral outcomes is contingent upon other political dynamics.

Taken together, the findings highlight the continued relevance of political marketing advertising within the electoral communication process in Rivers State. By enhancing public awareness and shaping voter attitudes, campaign advertising contributes significantly to candidate marketability. Nevertheless, its impact on electoral outcomes is most effective when it operates in conjunction with broader campaign strategies and organisational support.

Recommendations

1. Political parties and campaign teams should adopt more strategic and coordinated marketing and advertising approaches across both traditional and digital media platforms to strengthen candidate visibility and improve public recognition among the electorate.
2. Campaign messages should prioritise credibility, clarity, and policy relevance, as marketing advertisements that effectively communicate leadership competence and development agendas are more likely to generate favourable perceptions among voters.
3. Political marketing advertising efforts should be complemented with sustained grassroots engagement and voter outreach activities, since electoral viability is shaped not only by media exposure but also by direct interaction with communities and strong political organisational structures.

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