Textual Analysis of Select Political Rhetorics on Edo 2020 Governorship Election

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Abstract
The interest of this study is predicated on the premise that politicians creatively manipulate the electorate by using language and other semiotic resources, such as billboards, pamphlets and brochures, to appeal to a wide audience. Hence, the tendency to manipulate public opinion takes a strong hold in Nigerian political discourse. From avoidance of obvious facts to deliberate insertion of misrepresentative information, the discourse of politics is laden with manipulative rhetoric. The objectives of the study were to analyse the rhetorical strategies employed by politicians during the 2020 Edo governorship election campaigns, the development issues that dominated their rhetoric and the emotional appeal used. The paper used qualitative content analysis with focus on textual analysis. In the seven weeks leading to the September 19, 2020 Edo Governorship election, a total of 243 speeches were identified from television, social media and online sources. They were categorised into three areas based on the attacks, development and emotive appeal inherent in them. In total, excerpts from six speeches were analysed. The result showed that attack dominated the text of the rhetoric, infrastructural development was the dominant development issues and ethnic appeal, mudslinging were the emotional appeals used in the campaigns. The researchers concluded that the 2020 Edo governorship election was characterized by attacks and emotional rhetoric and recommended the need for communication advisers in campaign councils to design messages based on issues.

Keywords: Rhetoric, Political Discourse, Manipulation, Party, Elections

Introduction

From the Greek era till date, politics has always been a competitive affair and a game of intrigues, resulting in situations where candidates make statements against each other either to deride their opponents or woo the electorate's Support. Today, not only do politicians try to sell themselves and their programmes, they equally use the opportunity to smear their opponents with uncomplimentary remarks. As at present, some major political parties have been engaging in negative political advertisements. This is evident in the tremendous reeling of diverse political rhetoric during the 2020 Edo gubernatorial election. This is also a form of persuasive political communication. Today's politics has become largely mediatised. Mediatisation is a process in which political institutions are increasingly dependent on and shaped by the mass media

(Mazzoleni & Schulz, 1999 cited in Bos *et al*, 2014). Thus, political advertising is one out of the various marketing strategies adopted by parties to achieve their objectives (Ekhareafo & Akoseogasimhe, 2017). Political advertising is a form of marketing communication that is aimed at selling the candidate of a party to the electorate. Political parties now package their political candidates and sell to the people, so as to draw their votes (Asemah & Edegoh, 2012).

Practitioners and proponents see advertising activities as indispensable marketing tool which ultimately result in improved economy through the encouragement of competitors and provision of an ally to consumer's product choice making process. Odeomelam (2018) contends that the media are indispensable tool for political populism. The popularity of a candidate in an election depends on the rhetoric weaved around such a candidate. Advertising assists in the building of political economy and the tool of political power is used in the control of advertising practices to yield the desired benefits on the social system.

Rhetoric is the art of communication. Not only through words, but also how visuals influence an audience during a specific moment. At every moment of our lives, we experience a rhetorical situation: reading the newspaper, listening to a presidential address, tweeting, texting, choosing a new wall colour for your favourite room, designing a website or watching a movie. Rhetoric is every-where. The term 'political rhetoric' refers both to the ways in which politicians try to persuade various audiences and to the (academic) study of such oratory (Billig, 2003, cited in Tileaga, 2013).

Every day we are influenced by words and visuals. Words and visuals make us understand, think, inform, persuade, and emote. Social media can sometimes feel like a whirlwind filled with information that can overwhelm even the most passive user. For example, when we read a book, we take part in a rhetorical act. We are interacting with the author and the story they created. The polyphony of voices on social media, on the other hand, makes it harder to figure out how to respond. Language is powerful, and it encourages audiences to move to action. A political candidate most often wants readers and listeners in electioneering period to respond positively to their rhetoric during the polls. This is why Opeibi (2005) argues that language and politics are inseparably connected. The successful prosecution of political activities requires effective deployment of linguistic facilities. Contemporary human societies place a very high premium on democratic practices, of which election is a vital component. In modern political systems election campaigns are taken not only as an important social event but also linguistic event. Election periods in any nation generate a lot of interest among the political candidates in particular, and the civil society, in general. This is because the destiny of the people and the nation rests squarely on the shoulders of the successful candidates at the polls. It is no wonder then that both political actors and their supporters deploy different persuasive strategies to elicit support and woo voters in order to gain and control power.

Politicians use rhetorical devises to embellish their words in order to cajole the electorate. This can sometimes determine the number of votes he or she eventually gets at the poll. In fact the success of a politician depends, to a large extent, on his rhetorical style in a truly democratic situation. A politician must be thoroughly equipped rhetorically in order to tie up an opponent and at the same time imbued with the po

wer of arousing emotions of anger or pity in the electorate. This can be summed up in Beard (2000, p. 2) position that:

... the language of politics ... helps us to understand how language is used by those who wish to gain power, those who wish to exercise power and those who wish to keep power.

The language of political campaign, whether it is in the interrogative, declarative, imperative or exclamatory mode, contains some forms of promises to the electorate (Omozuwa & Ezejideaku, 2008). Abdel-Moety, (2015) cited by Oparinde (2020) stated that there is evidence that is manifested in political discourse through strategic use of language which allows politicians control political information. Politicians use rhetorical devises to embellish their words in order to cajole the electorate. This can sometimes determine the number of votes they eventually gets at the poll. In fact, the success of a politician depends, to a large extent, on the rhetorical style used in a truly democratic situation. A politician must be thoroughly equipped rhetorically in order to tie up an opponent and at the same time imbued with the power of arousing emotions of anger or pity in the electorate. Beard (2000, p. 57) contends that "although political campaigns, (sic) with their speeches, their written texts, their broadcasts, need to inform and instruct voters about issues that are considered to be of great importance, ultimately all the written and spoken texts that are produced during an election campaign are designed to persuade people to do one thing: to vote in a certain way." The language of political campaign, whether it is in the interrogative, declarative, imperative or exclamatory mode, contains some forms of promises to the electorate (Omozuwa, 2008).

Recognising that symbols extend beyond the realm of the discursive, other scholars extended (or at least opened up the possibility to extend) the definition of rhetoric to include visual and other nondiscursive symbols. For example, Foss (2017) defined rhetoric as the human use of symbols to communicate, arguing that in addition to the written and spoken word, rhetoric includes nondiscursive or nonverbal symbols like (but not limited to) television programmes, films and videos, video games, art, architecture, and advertisements. It is this power of language that motivates political aspirants to deploy political rhetoric in electioneering campaigns. The ultimate aim is to persuade the electorate to make them their choice in their voting decision. In view of the this, this study analysed the use of political rhetoric in the 2020 Edo Governorship Election.

Statement of the Problem

Language use in political campaigns has certain characteristic features which differentiate it from other varieties of language use. Common as some of these features may be in everyday situation, they remain very unique with politicians and politics. The language of political campaign embodied in propaganda and rhetoric, is persuasive. Politicians adopt these linguistic devices to cajole the electorate to vote for them and their parties by presenting themselves as the only capable persons for the job (Omozuwa 2008). The 2020 Edo State Governorship election presented the power of political rhetoric in electioneering campaigns. While some of the campaign messages were a paradox of the 2016 Governorship campaign, it seems there was a deliberate

attempt to take a rear view of the 2016 campaigns. This created a mixed strategy of attacks, emotional appeal and logic. The campaign rhetoric moved from issues based to political mudslinging. The resultant effect was supporters of two leading campaigns took the attacks and persuasive messages as a campaign refrain to woo voters.

Thus, while some of the political rhetoric presented the contestants as the path way to the state quest for development, other ridiculed and satirised the character of the other as lacking the moral compass to rule the state. It is difficult to ascertain the dominant political rhetoric deployed in the 2020 Edo Governorship election and the type of attacks used in the course of the campaign. This study, therefore, analysed the rhetoric texts to establish the rhetorical strategy employed by politicians, the development issues raised and the emotional appeal deployed by the political parties in the 2020 Edo Governorship election.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study:

1. What rhetorical strategies did politicians employed in the 2020 Edo Gubernatorial election?
2. What development rhetorics were canvassed during the 2020 Edo Governorship Election?
3. How did the major political players deploy emotional rhetoric to woo voters?

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored within the tenets of the theory of deceptive discourse propounded by McCornack in 2009. The theory states that when deceiving others, there is a deliberate manipulation of information within the communication process in different ways and context. The theory emanated from his work on information management theory. He proposed that deceptive discourse is ingrained in artificial intelligence and speech production. He argued that within the interactive process, the message meant to generate interaction is manipulated in the process. This is done through the quality and quantity, manner of presentation and relevance of the message to given situations. This theory is relevant to the study in several ways. Politicians deliberately focus on projects and programmes and project that will stimulate the mind of the masses, but which in actual sense, they do not have the capacity to pull them through. Most times, they demonise their opponents through propaganda in order to win the minds of the electorates. This leaves the audience with half information about the opponents, emphasis then shift from his or capacity to an alleged wrong doing that may not be true.

Review of Related Literature

Essentially, the notion of political rhetoric is concerned with the strategies used to construct persuasive arguments in political campaigns, debate or communication situations. Lawler (2015) defines Political rhetoric as an attempt to apply fundamental principles to the circumstances a particular people now face. At its best, it is both elevating and realistic and is effective at both mobilising immediate popular political

support and making an enduring impact on our self-understanding. This definition suggests that political rhetoric is a response to a society needs based on a politician understanding of the issues and what response may be considered appropriate. In other words, political rhetoric is an attempt to win the voters heart using the issues that challenge the society to drive the rhetoric.

On his part, Shogan (2015) posits that rhetoric is about persuasion. In politics, persuasion is either achieved by using rational, empirical arguments or appeals to emotions or tightly held beliefs. Rhetoric isn't restricted to scripted speeches. It's also about prose and conversation. This means political rhetoric revolves around political discourse, argumentation, campaigns, persuasion and mobilisation. Political rhetoric derives it functionality from the canons and elements of rhetoric. This means that the goal of political rhetoric to alter the mindset of the would-be voter to make a choice in favour of the rhetor.

Fundamentally, political rhetoric cannot make any headway without a sound knowledge of rhetoric. This is why Ekhareafo & Ojeifo (2021) contend that political discourse basically requires an exploration of the art of rhetoric. "Aristotle explains that persuasion can be achieved by the personal character of the speaker, by putting the audience into a certain frame of mind and by the proof provided by the words of the speech itself" (Roberts, 2010, p. 8). The art of rhetoric is rooted in rhetorical canons, however, Adegoju (2008) contends that there are three forms of rhetorical appeal: ethos, pathos and logos; which are critical to persuasive discourse. Ethos relates to the ability of the speaker to exhibit a personal character which is realised in the credibility of his/her speech. Pathos deals with the power of the speaker to arouse the emotion of his/her audience, while logos reside in the power of the speaker to persuade by means of truth and sound argument. Aristotle further points out that there are three kinds of rhetorical speeches which are deliberative, forensic and epideictic. In the deliberative kind of speech, the speaker either advises the audience to do something or warns against doing something. The forensic speech either accuses somebody or defends self or someone; while the epideictic speech praises or blames somebody, as it tries to describe things or deeds of the respective person as honourable or shameful.

The foregoing suggest that political rhetoric can be deployed to attack, praise and caution the audience to take the path or make choices that will benefit them later. The language deployed by the rhetor can make the rhetorical appeal convincing. Abdel-Moety (2015, p. 8) argues that "there is evidence that power is manifested in political discourse through the strategic use of language which allows politicians to control political information states." The strategies employed in political rhetoric can be identified from Jalali & Sadeghi's (2014, p. 9) study of political speeches in Iran, they observe that "one of the most important factors for political candidates to succeed in any election campaign is their use of skilful language and their ability to persuade and impress audiences with discourse filled with thoughts, emotions and excitement." In other words, the effective use of these approaches can help a candidate win the heart of the electorate. This means that political rhetoric must appeal to the reasoning faculties, stimulate emotions and cause the sense of joy in the minds of the audience.

A number of studies have interrogated the rhetoric of politics. First, Ademilokun (2016) conducted multi- modal discourse analysis of selected newspapers political campaign advertisements for Nigeria's 2015 elections and analysed patterns

of verbal and non-verbal cues in these political advertisements. The study adopted social semiotic approach of Gunther Krees to analyze data collected from the selected advertisements published in Nigerian newspapers between January and March 2015 at the peak of campaign between APC's Muhammadu Buhari, the eventual winner and PDP's Goodluck Jonathan of the then ruling party. The study findings revealed that producers of political advertisements creatively construct verbal and visual resources to project political aspirants for acceptance by the electorate.

Opeibi (2019) studied the Twittersphere as Political Engagement Space. The study examined how social media networks are changing the ways party politics and election campaigns are conducted in Nigeria, especially how these technologies are encouraging new ways of wooing voters and engaging ordinary citizens. Specifically, this study focused on the growing awareness of the use of Twitter for election campaigns and civic engagement between 2012 and 2015. The theoretical framework used in the study adopts approaches from Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) and Computer-Mediated Discourse Analysis (CMDA- e.g. Herring 2001, 2004). The data set consists of selected microblogging posts extracted from the Twitter handles of two major political parties and their political candidates. Additional Twitter posts on the election-related issues trending during the period provided supplemental data. The data collection procedures comprised media monitoring and use of computer software packages (e.g. *SketchEngine, Topsy, AntConc*) for online data harvesting over a period of fourteen months. This method was supplemented with manual downloading using google search. The analytical procedure follows the content analysis of significant textual features and discourse patterns in the online political conversation that sheds light on the persuasive use of technologies as discourse strategy. The study thus highlights the sociality of politics and socio-communicative features of Twitter as a campaign tool to mobilise support and woo voters in an emerging democracy.

Perhaps, one the critical appraisal of the rhetoric of politics is that undertaken by Oparinde, Rapeane-Mathonsi, Mheta & Champion (2020) who explored the manipulative rhetorical choices in Nigerian political speeches. Their focus was majorly on the linguistic import of political speeches from 2010 to 2019, a period in which Nigeria conducted three nationwide elections explored the rhetorical choices employed by politicians in the Nigerian political arena. They assert that politicians are widely believed to possess a skilled knowledge of astute linguistic use. They argued that politicians are presented with a deliberate selection of lexical choices which are coupled with their tactical use of language. Since political language is a social phenomenon. Through a purposive sampling strategy, the study analysed the rhetorical choices found in six Nigerian presidential speeches, with a specific focus on the lexico-semantic features of the speeches, and also the figurative expressions embedded in them. The study found that Nigerian politicians employ pronouns, modalities, hyperbole, repetition and the use of metaphor in their political communication. The study concludes that Nigerian politicians strategically use manipulative rhetoric in political discourse. The import of these studies is that the art of persuasion is rooted in spoken, symbolic and written communication. The effective deployment of the rhetorical canons by a rhetor will in no small way influence the audience.

Overview of the Edo Governorship Election

Prior to the 2020 Governorship Election in Edo State, the two dominant political parties conducted primaries as constitutionally mandated. Ize-Iyamu, the APC candidate won the primary with 27, 838. Dr. Pius Odubu polled 3,776 to emerge, second runner-up, while Osaro Obazee scored 2,724 votes. During the PDP primaries, frontline aspirants, Mr. Gideon Ikhine, Hon. Omoregie Ogbeide-Ihama, Ken Imansuagbon and others stood down for Obaseki thereby paving way for his emergence as the consensus candidate of the party. A total of 14 candidates registered with the Independent National Electoral Commission to contest in the election (INEC, 2020). The PDP Governorship candidate, Godwin Obaseki won the election for a second term, defeating APC Osagie lze-Iyamu and several minor party candidates. Obaseki received 57.3% of the votes, while Ize-lyamu received 41.6% (*Vanguard*, 2020).

In the event leading to the Edo 2020 elections, Comrade Adams Oshiomhole who had earlier supported Godwin Obaseki first tenure turned against him and backed his opponent Pastor Ize Iyamu, his decision to back Osagie Ize-Iyamu and single-handedly replace Obaseki with the Pastor came as a rude shock to many. Here is a man he vilified and called unprintable names in the run off to the 2016 governorship election. While it is given that only personal interests matter in the politics of Nigeria, the sight of Oshiomhole campaigning for Ize-Iyamu irritated many people. Perhaps not in the history of Nigeria has such rapprochement be seen before. The PDP capitalised on what Oshiomhole used against Ize-Iyamu when he campaigned for Obaseki in 2016. While Oshiomhole tried to wish away all the negative things he said about Ize-Iyamu in 2016, PDP and Obaseki would not have that. Weeks before the election, they compiled Oshiomhole's vituperations against Ize-Iyamu and put them into to a video which they played on a giant screen at Ring Road in the heart of Benin City. Giant speakers were also put in strategic location for clear audio.

Methodology

The study employed qualitative content analysis with a focus on textual analysis. Textual analysis as noted by Asemah, Gujbawu, Ekhareafo & Okpanachi (2012) is an in depth interpretation given to communication text; providing background, historical linkages and predicting the likely outcome of a given communication behaviour expressed in media text. The study analysed rhetorical choices employed by the two dominant political parties APC and PDP during the 2020 Edo State Governorship Election. The seven weeks period leading to the September 19, 2020 were reviewed. Two hundred and forty-three stories (243) centred around the campaigns in form of speeches, jingles and advertisements. The researchers categorised the rhetorical discourses into three; derogatory/personal attack, issue based content and emotional appeal. The researcher purposively selected two stories to represent each category. These were collated and analysed with the aim of finding similarities or differences in the choice of rhetoric employed by the candidates of the All Progressive Congress (APC) and the Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP). In selecting the stories, one was taking from television, three from online news media and two from social media platforms. The lexical meanings of the text were discussed with regard to their impact on the Nigerian political setting. The three categories are defined below:

1. **Derogatory/Personal Attack:** There are political rhetoric that are vituperative in nature. Often, they are half-truths that are designed to diminish the perceived goodwill of the opponents.
2. **Issue-based Content:** These are words that focus on the socio-economic development of the people. Issue based rhetoric suggest and proffer solutions to development issues like poverty alleviation, employment, anti-corruption, education reforms.
3. **Emotional Appeal Rhetoric:** These are statements, images or motion pictures strictly designed to stir electorates' emotions, thereby shaping their voting behaviours.

Data Presentation and Analysis

The texts of the select campaigns are presented below:

- **Styles of Rhetorics:** Derogatory/personal attack

  We are not doubting you going to the university. That is not the issue. The issue is (that) you failed by your own records. You failed school cert. You had three credits, no English, no Maths, even to enter A level would have been difficult and if you got the A Level, where is the result? That is a moral question. A lot of people are looking up to you as a governor and as a leader. The question is that you failed your level and that is why you were disqualified (by APC) and your disqualification arose from information from the PDP, your party now. Because the PDP when I was contesting against you (in 2016) said you have no results. Why have you not answered the question? Where is your result? Ize-Iyamu tackled Obaseki during the 2020 Edo Governorship Debate on Channels TV.

Table 1:

Textual Unit	Analysis
Theme	Derogatory and personal attack
Subject matter	The rhetorical statement focuses on education and integrity of the PDP candidate
Intention	The statement was aimed at discrediting the educational qualifications of Godwin Obaseki, the PDP governorship candidates. This was meant to weaken his integrity rating amongst Edo electorates

The excerpts analysed above (table 1) was culled from statements made by the candidate of the All Progressive Congress (APC), Osagie Ize-Iyamu during the governorship debate on channels Television on Sunday, September 13, 2020. The statement was a pure political rhetoric aimed at discrediting the opponent for obvious political reasons.

- *Derogatory/personal attack*

  "This election is a contest with Oshiomhole. We have dealt with him at the national level, we will bury him politically in this election; because he has no regard for Benin people, he has no regard for us in Oredo, and

we will show him that he is nothing."- Extract from Obaseki's speech During PDP Governorship Campaign flag-off (Source: The Cable, Sept. 5, 2021)

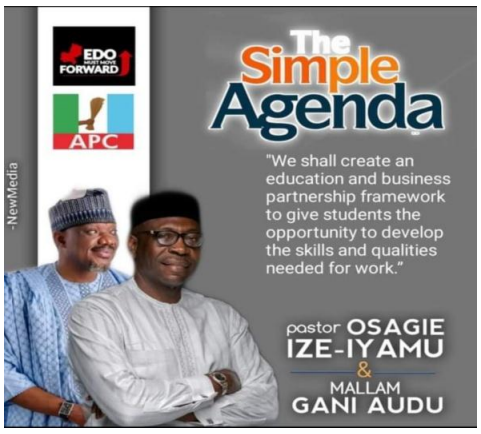
Table 2:

Textual Unit	Analysis
Theme	Derogating and personal attack
Subject matter	A harsh rhetoric that bothered on the political survival of Comrade Adams Oshiomohole, the former National Chairman of APC
Intention	This statement was made to spark ethnic tension between the Benins who are in the majority and the Afemais. The rhetoric also intended to downside the political sagacity of Oshiomhole who was the heavy-weight in APC camp – this was meant to demoralise APC followers

The above verbal attack (Table 2) was contained in Godwin Obaseki remarks during the flag-off of the PDP campaign on July 26, 2021.

- **Styles of Rhetorics:** *Development Issue*





Source: Social Media

Table 3:

Textual Unit	Analysis
Theme	Business / educational / agricultural development – issue based political rhetoric.
Subject matter	An expression of APC's vision and plan for businesses and education
Intention	To portray Ize-Iyamu/Gani as leaders with the wherewhital to transform the education/agricultural sector and boost performance of private businesses in the state. This rhetoric was designed to garner goodwill, support and votes from electorates who have special interest in these areas.

The above statements (table 3) were contained in a poster circulated on social media by media influencers of the People's Democratic Party (PDP). These posters were deeply circulated online because of their potency to harvest electorate's attention.

- *Development Issue*



Source: Social Media

Table 4:

Textual Unit	Analyses
Theme	Pic i & ii indicates educational / ICT / infrastructural development Issue-based political rhetoric
Subject matter	An expression of PDP's vision and plans for all-round infrastructural development
Intention	Information on the both campaign posters were essentially put up to portray Obaseki/Shaibu as performing leaders who have beautiful plans for the retooling of the state's critical infrastructure. Influencing voting behavior in their party's favour remains the goal here.

The above political rhetoric (table 4) was contained in social media campaign posters during the electioneering period. The repetitive use of 'shall' in both images was an attempt to demonstrate certainty or commitments to undertake the promises – absolute rhetoric.

- **Emotional Issue**

"You people know that I have always been fighting for you. Cast your votes and defend it,"- Obaseki said this while addressing PDP members and supporters in Oluku Ward 6, Ovia North East Local Government Area. Source: *Business Day* (August 25, 2020).

"The only thing they have said is that I refused to share money; I am not taking care of the people who brought me into office. I said 300,000 Edo people voted for me to be governor; if I do for the people, everybody will benefit." Obaseki Statement towards the build up of the campaign. Source: Sahara Reporters (July 20, 2019).
Source: Online Newspapers

Figure 5:

Textual Unit	**Analysis**
Theme	An appeal to pity
Subject matter	An expression geared towards painting the PDP candidates as pro-masses (free from internal or external control)
Intention	It was an attempt to exploit the peoples' feelings of pity in order to win their support. It sufficiently scaled the PDP candidate as individual who was being fought by some political establishments because of his devotion to impact positively on majority of Edo People. This repeated rhetorics moved a lot of persons to identify with him and subsequently voting in his favour. This political communication strategy immensely affected the voting behaviours of Edo voters in favour of the PDP candidates during the poll.

The analysed speeches were culled from the *Business Day* Newspaper & Sahara Reporters online platforms. The rhetorics therein appealed to the emotions of Edo electorate immensely.

- **Emotional Issue**

"I have made a mistake by supporting a man who has no vision for my people. So, I want to correct my mistakes by making sure a servant of God, Pastor Osagie Ize-Iyamu, is elected as governor and kick the snake out of the government house,"- Oshiomhole statement during the campaign.
Source: The Cable, July 21, 2029.

Table 6:

Textual Unit	**Analyses**
Theme	Emotional rhetoric
Subject matter	The use of the words I have made mistakes and referring to Ize-Iyamu as 'a servant of God' were clear attempt of appealing to the emotions of Edo electorate. Oshiomhole, who wields fierce oratory prowess tried to disabuse the minds of Edo people from the unsavory comments he made about Ize-Iyamu in 2016. This strategy, nevertheless, was less potent as the PDP candidate heavily dwelled on those previous comments of Oshiomhole on Ize-Iyamu

Intention	This statement was a deliberate attempt to exonerate Ize-Iyamu from the damaged Oshiomhole caused him during 2016 Governorship Election. It was also an attempt to appeal to the conscience and emotions of Edo People, which would make them see the APC candidate as a better alternative to the incumbent. A rhetoric designed to trigger positive electoral responses

Discussions of Findings

Research Question 1: **What Dominant Political Rhetoric did Politicians employed in the 202 Edo Governorship Election?**

Generally, the various texts analysed revealed the presence of emotive text, populist stunt and attacks in the campaign messages. As revealed in this study, harsh derogatory remarks flooded the political space of Edo State during the 2020 governorship electioneering period. The two dominant political parties went extra mile to dig up filthy pasta of opponents just to disparage them before the voters. There were deliberate use of sarcasms and innuendos to frustrate the electoral fortunes of opponents by both parties. As shown in table 1, the candidate of APC openly ridiculed the educational credentials of the PDP candidate. In the same vein, the PDP candidate pounced on the leader of APC in a bid to reduce him to 'nothing' amongst potential voters. This is line with the study conducted by Oparinde, Rapeane-Mathonsi, Mheta & Champion (2020) who explored the manipulative rhetorical choices in Nigerian political speeches. their focus was majorly on the linguistic import of political speeches from 2010 to 2019, a period in which Nigeria conducted three nationwide elections explored the rhetorical choices employed by politicians in the Nigerian political arena. Their study concluded that Nigerian politicians strategically use manipulative rhetoric in political discourse. It is important to state the use of political attacks or mudslinging innuendos in campaign is to reduce the opposing candidate as lacking the essential character qualities needed to lead a people. Such mudslinging stunts become more meaningful when the candidate in question appears to demonstrate traits that cast doubts on his or her personality.

Research Question 2: What Development Rhetoric were canvassed during the 2020 Edo Governorship Election?

Candidates of the major political parties (PDP&APC) made efforts to intimate the people of their plans of making life better for them. As seen in table 3&4, both parties highlighted diverse formula they would initiate in transforming the various sector of Edo's economy. The focus of the rhetoric represents the development leaning the contestants. From the text, both the APC and PDP aligned with the dominant paradigm of development (Development that emphasises growth in infrastructure and public utilities). This suggests that the infrastructural gap in the state requires more attention.

In a developing country like Nigeria, the imperative of issues based campaign becomes relevant. What is obvious is that infrastructure, education, agriculture remain were the dominant focus of the campaigns. While these may be necessary in the rhetoric, the neglect of the other key aspects of development suggest that the political class continue to play the development needs of the people from on one perspective. Smith (2006) contends that if a development strategy results in robust economic growth and political stability without a significant change in the quality of life of the masses of people, something is wrong. High growth performance without people participation is clearly economic growth without development. This is evident in Brazil, a country that experienced and suffered the consequences of "growth without development" (Todaro & Smith 2006). Its growth performance was the best in Latin America between the l960s to the l980s.

Research Question 3: How did the Major Political Actors deploy Emotional Rhetoric to woo Voters?

As shown in table 5 & 6, the political parties under discourse sufficiently explored a philosophical fallacy called, ' argumentum ad misericordia,' an act of eliciting pity from people in a bid to influence their behavior to the benefit of the message sender. Apart from this, the appeal to ethnic sentiment re-echoes the wounds of ethnic rivalry in the Nigeria political space. Such emotive discourses spread hate speech, violence and tension in the political space. This aligns with Ekhareafo & Uchenunu's (2018) study of hate speech on social during the 2015 general election. They found that social media bloggers used indexicality in three ways; the use of codes, words, and graphics to establish the failure of the 'minority' and the need for majority ethnic group to rule the nation, the use of uncouth words to ridicule and mimic contestants; and the reinforcement of religious divide between the contestants. The researchers identified words that promote the ethnic question to include "north must rule, 'power belongs to the north.' 'izons are the most tolerable people.' The discourse showed that minority access to power was a mistake and the north maintains power hegemony over the other ethnic groups in Nigeria.

The import of the data is that when emotions take over campaigns, the reoccurring messages will be laden with mudslinging, strive and hatred. As seen from the text, the appeal to ethnicity in a country in search of integration defeats the notion of 'one nation bound in freedom.' Appeals to emotion help spread the fire of hatred but leaves the critical questions to ask in the campaign out.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study reveals that Nigerian politicians like their counterparts in other parts of the world, use language in a unique ways during political campaigns to give extra effect and force to their message using mostly attacks and emotional appeal. The researchers, therefore, recommended the following:

1. Advertising agencies should always meticulously vet the contents of political advertisements if the issues therein are devoid of animosities.

2 Monitoring and public complaints centres be established in major cities to beef up ASP vetting and approval procedures of political advertisements.

3. The National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) should rise to its feet by checkmating unguarded political speeches and statements on Television and Radio.

4 Civil societies such as Transition Monitoring Group (TMG) should organise workshops for political stakeholders on issue based campaign messages or speeches and relinquish derogatory remarks.

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