

The Outdoor Ads of the 2019 Presidential Campaign: A Semiotic Analysis



Aloysius Nnanna Nworisa^f;
Omo Abunene[∞];
Kemi Abiodun^γ
&
Valentine Elaigwe[↔]

Abstract

Political advertising in Nigeria has a long history which dates to the earliest newspapers and broadcasting stations. Since the earliest elections in Nigeria, outdoor political advertising has played key roles in mobilizing voters and getting them to support specific political parties by framing persuasive messages in unique ways. The formal campaign period for the 2019 presidential election campaign was from November 2019 to February 23, 2019, and within this period, the two major political parties Peoples Democratic Party and All Progressive Congress tried to maximize their strategic uses of the media, including outdoor advertisements to consolidate their positions and reputation. This study was designed to examine PDP and APC approaches to, and their uses of outdoor advertising through a semiotic analysis of all the available outdoor campaign materials which were submitted to the Advertising Practitioners Council of Nigeria (APCON) for vetting and approval. Three research questions were formulated to guide the study, and they are; What types of outdoor advertising and methods did the two parties use for the 2019 presidential campaign? How did APC and PDP employ outdoor advertising in the 2019 presidential campaign?, and what are the surface and deep meanings(semiotics) embodied in the outdoor hoarding of the two parties during the 2019 presidential campaign? Using triangulated mixed methods approaches, the qualitative and quantitative data were subjected to semiotic analysis. The findings from the semiotic methods show that all the campaigns created by the two political parties have outside or original levels of presentation (surface and deep meanings). All the elements- wording, language, colour, space, illustration, picture, image, code, logo, and other symbolic illustrations and designs conveyed different meanings to the different electorate. Furthermore, the findings show that whereas the PDP tended to emphasize protection, welfare, inclusiveness, and regaining power, the APC showed a proclivity for ethical conduct, fighting corruption and cleaning up the society with its symbolic broom.

Keywords: *Advertising, Semiotics, Outdoor and APCON*

^f Aloysius Nnanna Nworisa, PhD, Department Of Mass Communication, University Of Nigeria Nsukka

[∞] Omo Abunene, Beam Media Co./Affiliation

^γ Kemi Abiodun, Department of Mass Communication, University of Nigeria, Nsukka

[↔] Valentine Elaigwe, Ground Force Marketing Services

Introduction

Advertising is an age-long marketing communication strategy that is utilized by societies in redefining their socio-cultural values as well as playing a pivotal, central role in economic and political participation. Advertising continues to grow along with other sub-sectors of the economy, and several factors have continued to make advertising outstanding. One such factor is the digitization of the media, i.e. atomization of communication tools, and social media globalization, which has changed the advertising landscape recently. The Nigerian advertising industry has its humble origin and roots in the first advertising agency which the colonial masters established in 1928 and exported to Nigeria to serve the interest of the expatriates and the indigenous people. This foreign advertising agency was known as West Africa Publicity Company, which later became Lintas and doubled as a traditional advertising and outdoor service. In 1959, Afro-media, an outdoor agency was carved out from Lintas agency to undertake full outdoor services in Nigeria.

Advertising as a crucial service sector in Nigeria from the earliest till date, is not separated from government and economic indices of our time. The military and civilian governments have impacted the industry in many ways. The indigenization policy of General Gowon immediately after the Nigeria/Biafra civil war of 1967-1970, from 1972-1974 gave ownership of the industry to Nigerians, while General Babangida enacted a decree in 1988 that birthed APCON, therefore making advertising a profession. Similarly, the processes and return to democratic rule between 1993-1999 increased political advertising which boosted advertising gains and billings. Semiotics is frequently used in advertising to signify an advertiser's message or service through the use of signs symbols, or images. A sign can be a combination of a signifier and signified. In other words, a sign can be understood as a signifier or a symbol that signifies something else. In all political campaigns across the world and society, symbolic contents, messages, slogans, themes, styles, and imageries are embedded in campaign materials to convey specific or general meanings to different electorate.

Cook (2002:22), argued that "in the contemporary society advertising is everywhere, it is both part of, and has helped to create, a new global culture which ignores national boundaries". He further posited that advertising has become the art of the modern world and in all media, both electronic and print, information materials of all kinds and texts in a general sense, there is a complex network of written text accompanied by images and other non-linguistic elements, designed as coherent entities, that are often more visual than verbal. Over the years, outdoor advertising has become a major critical communication strategy for election and political participation amongst politicians and their agents. The electorate is continually exposed to a variety of O-O-H campaign messages and slogans, that enable a significant number of voters to make an informed opinion and decision. Political advertising differs from commercial advertising in that the product is either a person or a set of values, opinions, and attitudes rather than goods and services. Considered a planned communication strategy, outdoor political advertising has a long history in Nigeria's political landscape. In the 1964 election in Nigeria, Chief Obafemi Awolowo adopted a skywriting outdoor campaign for the mobilization of the voters. This non-conventional outdoor communication strategy was first used in the U.S. golden age of advertising of the 1950s and 1960s. Political campaigns are recognized as quintessential communication activities whereby advertising is widely used, but there have not been many semiotic analyses or research

on advertising campaigns in Nigeria. This study was designed to help address the problem of inadequate attention to semiotic analysis especially outdoor advertising in election campaigns. The goal of this research is to examine how the two major political parties used outdoor advertising in their presidential campaigns that started on November 19 2018, to the election date, February 23, 2019. Although the parties started to use advertising and other election communication tools long before the official flag-off date of November 19, 2018, we limited our study to the official campaign period during which there was the most intensive use of all available campaign tools. With our focus on semiotics, and the interpretation of signs in visual communication, our goal was to ascertain the various graphic approaches and strategies in the campaign billboards and posters.

The Situation (2019 Campaigns)

Outdoor political advertising is an essential aspect of communication strategy designed for political mobilization and participation. It has been used over the years by politicians, and their agents, supporters to canvass for votes. The essential task of political advertising is to gain the confidence of the people for their acceptance of ideas, and in the case of political campaign advertising, to influence their votes. The goal of almost every political advertising and advertising copy is to persuade and influence constituency voters and to win elections. Political advertising uses a lot of elements, signs, symbols, visuals, arts, colour, words, texts, photographs, simulations and images to capture, influence, captivate and retain the audience's attention. We live in a world of signs, and advertising is meaningless without the world of signs and symbols. The 2019 presidential campaign ads- in all the media- presented great opportunities to examine how the two political parties used advertising messages and visual communication to canvass for votes.

Significance of the study

The problem of insufficient attention to semiotic analysis in advertising research and the uses of outdoor advertising in political campaigns in Nigeria is a serious one because of the increasing value of communication in politics, the popularization of billboards and mobile advertising in contemporary Nigeria, and the clout of the Outdoor Advertising Association of Nigeria (OAAN) in the Nigerian communication ecosystem.

Research Questions

The research was guided by these research questions:

- (a) What types of outdoor advertising and methods did the two parties use for the 2019 presidential campaign?
- (b) How did APC and PDP employ outdoor advertising in the 2019 presidential campaign?
- (c) What are surface and deep meanings (semiotics) embodied in the outdoor hoarding of the two parties during the 2019 presidential campaign?

Literature Review

Advertising is a subject that has attracted an enviable degree of interest in virtually all human societies in recent times. Of its significant role in the socio-economic activities of many societies, an appreciable number of scholars, practitioners and media men and

women have, over the years tackled the issues in advertising. However, very few of these have paid adequate specific attention to outdoor advertising communication research. The study examined related works from various authors to help the consumers understand and value the relevance of semiotics in communication research, and how it influences political participation and the election process. The review of related literature is broken into: The history of Outdoor Political Advertising and the Roles of Semiotics in Political Advertising.

The History of Outdoor Political Advertising

The Nigerian political development will be incomplete if the outdoor campaigns are neglected, or ignored. From 1960 to 2019, Nigeria has had many elections in which outdoor advertising played significant roles. Outdoor campaign is not only central to an election but also a foundation at which most elections rest. Considered a portent communication strategy, outdoor political advertising has a long history in the Nigerian political landscape. There has been the massive deployment of political campaign materials such as billboards, posters, handbills, body materials, flyers, and unspecified promotional and PR campaign materials in the early days of the Nigerian political journey till date. Embodied in these campaign materials are graphic images, colours, words, texts, pictures, simulations, signs and symbols. Nigeria has never conducted any elections without the utilization and use of outdoor campaigns. (Olujide *et al.*, 2010) argued that one of the major advertising strategies experienced in the early days of Nigeria's political history, was the adoption of skywriting or sky typing, a specialized system used by Chief Obafemi Awolowo in the 1964 election. The author stated that skywriting which is an aspect of outdoor political campaigns has its origin in the 1950s and 1960s, a period referred to as the golden age of advertising. Skywriting is a non-conventional outdoor advertising that uses aircraft or drones to spell words or texts by mixing paraffin oil into smoking plane exhaust. As the media are changing, so also is the skywriting. In advanced democracies, such as the U.S., skywriting is still being used as an outdoor campaign strategy.

(Amifor 2016), posited that Nigeria has experienced, and is still experiencing political outdoor advertising. He revealed that no elections would be conducted without the politicians and their supporters using outdoor campaigns to canvass for votes from the electorate. He believed that in 1964, a few years after Nigeria became politically independent Chief Awolowo of Action Group adopted skywriting to campaign for voters' support and participation. The author believed this development marked the beginning of a landmark in the history of Nigeria's political evolution. According to Opeibi (2004), political advertising has grown in the past three decades in Nigeria. According to him, this growth in political advertising comes as a result of the awareness created by political parties and their candidates on the power of outdoor campaigns and promotional items such as billboards, posters, handbills, flyers, monies, and foods, to mobilize the electorate to vote for them and their candidates. The author further argued that the uses and deployment of outdoor campaign hoardings, posters, billboards etc., among politicians and their agents became widely used in the 2007, 2011 and 2015 elections in Nigeria. The author observed that the texts, languages, slogans, uses of images, spaces, pictures, and symbols that were embodied in the campaigns were very catchy, creative and appealing and helped to shape and influence the voters' attitudes and decisions.

The Role of Semiotics in Political Advertising

Advertising which essentially is an aspect of communication is indebted to the fields and scholarly works on semiotics. Advertisements have many hidden signs and meanings in them, for example, brand name, logo, package, design, colour and other visual and artistic illustrative elements including images. The objective is to learn and interpret the message which is conveyed in the advertisement. Semioticians believed that elements of advertisement can be interpreted at two levels- outside and original level.

(Eco, 1983), (Barthes, (1952) and (Danesi, (2004), in their separate works, stated that the outside level uses signs creatively to create or build an image or character for the product (in this study, the product is the politician, his opinion, concept, idea, and belief etc). They maintained that the sign can be an image, word, font, character, colour, and slogan. They further revealed that the original level is made up of different unseen meanings. The arrangement of image, colour, slogan or wording must be interpreted by the audience. The above authors believed that the key to advertising analysis is the effective way of understanding the signifier and the signified in the body of the advertisement. They posited that the signifier is the thing, and the signified is the psychological thought. A product has both a signifier and a signified. They argued that in advertisements, the signifier is the colour, brand name, logo design etc. They also revealed that the signified has two meanings- denotative and connotative. Denotative tends to be described as the definitional, factual, clear or common sense meaning of a sign. The connotative term is used to refer to the socio-cultural and personal associations like ideological and emotional aspects of the sign. Denotation describes the picture. Connotations are frequently described in terms of levels of representation and level of learning.

In this study on the history of semiotics as it relates to political advertising, Danesi (2004) revealed that the importance of semiotics in relation to other fields of life cannot be overlooked. He stated that semiotics has been in existence for many years and that mankind has been using it unknowingly. In buttressing the view of Danesi above, (Daniel, 2007), remarked that semiotics have a long history, and that signs and symbols constitute major elements and features in the advertisement, and the meaning attached to them depends on the people, value, and culture. According to him, to coin a word to refer to a thing, the community or its culture must agree on a simple meaning, within their language, but that word can transmit that meaning only within the language's grammatical structure, code, and pattern. Also, they stressed that a sign can be a word, a sound, or a visual image or representation. According to Barton *et al.*, (1987), advertising is embedded with lots of visual representation both in commercial and political advertisements and other promotional campaigns.

(Barthes, 1957) further said sign is the inseparable combination of the signifier and signified, while signified is the meaning we associate with the sign, the idea or thing that signifier represents. The signifier is the physical form of the sign as we perceive it through our sense, image, object or word being referred to. He believed also that signs are not only the visual aspects that we all immediately think of, but also extend to include areas such as gesture, body language, music, clothing, poetry, painting, and food. The process of deciphering a sign involves many interpretive aspects. While a particular symbol may mean something different in one culture, it may mean something different in another. It is how the mass culture interprets that symbol which determines its meaning. The study revealed that signs can represent anything, but can also mean

differently to different people or cultures. For example, smoke is a sign of fire, ice is a sign of cold, and red colour is a sign of danger. According to Deely (1982) at the heart of semiotics is the realization that the whole of human experience, without exception, is an interpretive structure mediated and sustained by signs. According to Barthes (1972), while analyzing the structure and relevance of signs and symbols, came out with two common categories: image clothing and descriptive clothing. In this regard, an advertisement (commercial or political) has its structure of meaning. Researchers such as (Saussure Ferdinand de 1913) and (Peirce (1914) believed that culture and philosophy are an integral part of semiotics. Saussure said: "Semiotics is a science and Peirce posited that the meaning of advertisement is not transmitted to its target audience or consumer, rather the audience (electorate) keenly creates the meaning according to a multi-part interplay of code or convention. They believed that we learn, and we live in a world of signs. The advertising field is not an exception. In advertising, a code or convention is used to convey its message to its target audience. For example in one of APC's campaigns, it used 4+4, a symbolic code, that depicts different meanings, and one of them is continuity, "change". The change by the PDP campaign symbolizes the failed agenda of APC. Generally, advertisements can be analyzed contextually, socially, visually, verbally and culturally.

According to Lawes (2019), semiotic analysis is not complete until signs and symbols are meaningfully connected to society, culture and ideology. (Baudrillard, 1970) emphasized that consumption is not just about buying items and enjoying one's purchases, but, to consume is to take part in a semiotic game in which we communicate with each other and construct identity for ourselves through our consumer habits. The author shows how consumers use and spend semiotic signs such as art prints, gadgets, ornaments, bodies, toys, and numerous souvenirs. His analysis and remarks on the body in relation to semiotics, are more relevant than ever as the consumers of today use their Facebook, and Instagram accounts to broadcast a stream of images in which everything-clothes, accessories, hair, eyebrows, eyelashes, skin colour and tone, muscles, the shape and fullness of the lips, and the visible markers of gender- is carefully curated to give off a distinct and coherent message for both the recipient and the producer.

Semiotics play critical roles in political advertising, and deploying semiotics in a way that will provide a service to other fields of life, requires a degree of flexibility, and this is a skill that users will deliberately and responsibly cultivate with no loss of integrity. From the reported findings, the research questions raised to guide the study are addressed, and the study also addresses the outdoor political advertising gap.

Theoretical Framework

The cost-based theory of advertising and marketing has a relevant bearing on this research. This theory emerged from the theories of marketing formulated by Evans, D. and M. Salinger in 2005. The theory sees advertising campaigns as consisting of two complementary service components, namely: creative (development and production of advertising messages), and the media (planning and buying media space and time to disseminate advertising messages to the target markets). The theory is used to explain the bundling or unbundling of advertising agency rather than the advertiser, how advertising agency is structured, and how specialization and compensation methods are affected by the increase in media prices relative to other costs. The theory rests on three key assumptions: contestability, the presence of scale and scope of economies in the

production of advertising campaigns, and limited substitutability between the two main inputs to an advertising campaign, message and the media.

In the bundling scenario, the advertiser pays the fixed information costs (costs of searching for an agency, learning about it, and maintaining the relationship) for an advertising campaign (account). While in an unbundling system, the production technology of an advertising campaign is identical in the bundled scenario. The advertiser must bear higher information costs to establish and organize relationships separately with both a media buying and a creative agency. In addition, an advertiser may incur coordination and integration costs for purchasing the two complementary inputs to an advertising campaign from separate firms. This theory says the advertiser must pay duplicate fixed information costs when it purchases services for an account from two firms, as compared to the bundling case where only one input supplier is employed. The advertiser also needs to pay for creative services separately. In return, the advertiser can benefit from a lower unit variable cost for its media space and time purchases. That is, specialized media buying agencies can aggregate volume and bargain more effectively for lower prices (higher discounts) from the media suppliers and also have lower overhead costs for media buying operations. The advertiser's choice of bundled or unbundled services depends on which scenario minimizes total production costs, given that advertising agencies pass on their costs to the advertiser in this contestable market. The cost-based theory is considered appropriate for this study as it will assist agencies, advertisers and media specialists in making decisions on how to achieve cost savings and efficiency in the advertising sector as well as delivering efficient services to the customers cost-effectively. This is why the cost-based theory was very apt in studying the semiotic of outdoor ads in the 2019 presidential campaign adopted by PDP and APC.

Methods of Data

These include semiotic, thematic, Delphi, and content examination of campaign materials and outdoor billboards collected from subject agencies that handled the campaigns for the two political parties, and their agents, APCON, OAAN and AAAN. The agencies are: Unik Sites, Unik Sites, Sx Creations, Mshelia Datau and Co, Smate & Smate, Aretisterix Ltd, Haruna Job Zubairu, Smooth 98.1Fm, Atiku Champions Network, Sask Media Consulting, Beam Media, Lydia Ajagum Odiuwa, New Crystal Communications Ltd, PYO Support Group, Neat-Tag outdoor Ltd, Afromedia, Optimum exposures, Lona, Loatstad, and XLbillboard.

Analysis of Data

The billboards and other ad materials that were used by the two political parties were presented for analysis. PDP has eight ad campaign materials and APC has also eight ad campaign materials. All were made available by APCON, and they constituted the population of the study. Analysis of the materials focused on the wording, theme, subject matter, style, interpretation, intention, use of picture, colour, language, space, and other presidential branding campaign designs. The analysis of data is divided into the following:

Semiotic Analysis of PDP Presidential Branding

Table 1 below shows that the five analysis categories items – theme, subject matter, intention, style and advertiser as the keys for the semiotic campaign analyses. The theme

of the campaign is to make Nigeria better or to reposition her, and the subject matter of the campaign indicates a developmental issue- repositioning Nigeria for improved performance while countering APC's change agenda that has caused Nigeria great losses is the intention of the campaign. The style shows that the ad copy employs a variety of elements such as space, colour, picture, and different font sizes including upper cases and logo to convey the message to the prospective voters. The advertiser is PDP.

Table 1: Wording/Slogan: Articulated 2019. Kicker- Vote Atiku/Obi ticket, Let's get Nigeria working again

5 Analysis Categories	
Theme	To make Nigeria better and to reposition her.
Subject matter	Developmental issue- repositioning of Nigeria for improved performance
Intention	To counter APC's change agenda that has caused Nigeria great losses
Style	The copy employs a variety of elements such as space, colour, and pictures. Different font sizes- upper cases and logo to convey the message to the voters.
Advertiser	People's Democratic Party (PDP).

Table 2 presents the five analysis categories which include- the theme of the campaign, the intention of the campaign, the subject matter of the campaign, the style and the advertiser. The advertising theme for the campaign is to reposition Nigeria well to achieve greatness, while the subject matter presents a critical issue which is to make Nigeria take its rightful position in the global world or community. The campaign intends to fault APC's change agenda that has brought untold hardships to Nigerians, leading to job losses and opportunities. The style, on the other hand, highlights the following essential elements: colour, pictures of Atiku/Obi, a combination of lower and upper characters, space and logo etc. The advertiser is PDP.

Table 2: Wording: Let's get Nigeria working again

5 Analysis categories	
Theme	To position Nigeria to achieve greatness.
Subject matter	A critical ad issue is- to make Nigeria take its rightful position in the global world or community.
Intention	To fault APC's change agenda that has brought untold hardships to Nigerians, leading to job losses and opportunities.
Style	The ad copy presents essential elements such as colour, a picture of Atiku/Obi, a combination of lower and upper characters, space, logo.
Advertiser	PDP.

Table 3 below shows the essential elements embodied in the copy as well as the five categories of semiotic analysis. These include- theme, subject matter, intention, style and advertiser. In this campaign, there is less attention on the theme. In other words, the ad does not pay attention to the theme. Also in the subject matter of the campaign, it presents a non-issue or non-developmental stance, while the intention is to highlight the power of teamwork or team spirit in governance, the advertising copy or the caption is

very punchy and catchy. It has colour, space, candidate's pictures- (Atiku/Obi) and big font sizes. The advertiser is PDP.

Table 3: Wording- ATIKU/OBI 2019. Kicker: Vote For The Dream Team

5 Analysis categories	
Theme	There is less attention on the theme.
Subject matter	Non-issue/non-developmental
Intention	To highlight the power of teamwork or team spirit in governance or leadership
Style	Ad copy or caption is punchy and catchy, it has colour, space, candidates' picture- Atiku/Obi and big font sizes.
Advertiser	PDP.

Table 4 presents the five semiotic analysis categories of the advertising copy which include- theme, subject matter, intention, style and the advertiser. In the wording- Atiku-Obi 2019, kicker, let's get Nigeria working again has a theme that focuses on repositioning Nigeria due to bad leadership by the APC government, and the subject matter has developmental issue- raising the standards of living in Nigeria and counter or puncture APC's change agenda that has brought woes to the citizenry. The advertising copy intends to convince the audience to vote APC out because of their failed promises. The uses of candidates' pictures- Atiku/Obi, logo, a combination of colour, space, and lower and upper font sizes are dominant features that are employed to convey a message to the electorate as the caption is appealing and catchy. The advertiser is a political action group known as Youths for Atiku.

Table: 4 Wording: ATIKU-OBI 2019, Kicker let's get Nigeria working again

5 Analysis categories	
Theme	Repositioning of Nigeria due to bad leadership by the APC government
Subject matter	Developmental issue- raising the standards of living in Nigeria and countering APC's change agenda that has brought woes to the citizenry.
Intention	To convince the audience/electorate to vote APC out because of their failed promises.
Style	Use of candidates' pictures- Atiku/Obi, logo, combination of colour, space, and lower and upper font sizes dominate advertising copy.
Advertiser	Political Action Group- Youths for Atiku.

Table 5 below presents graphic features and elements employed in the advertising copy. These include the five metrics for the analysis of the features which are; theme, subject matter, intention, style, and advertiser. The wording: Friends of Atiku, interpretatively lacks any theme, as it has no discernable subject matter. Also, it lacks intention. The copy lacks theme, subject matter and intention, but it employs elements like the picture of Atiku and Obi, logo, space, few fonts to convey the message. It did not address any issue either developmental or non-developmental. The wording was not too catchy either. The advertiser is a political action group called Friends of Atiku.

Table 5: Wording: Friends of Atiku

5 Analysis categories	
Theme	Lacks theme
Subject matter	No discernable subject matter
Intention	Lacks intention
Style	The wording is not catchy. Employs elements like pictures of Atiku/Obi, logo, colour, space, few fonts to convey the message.
Advertiser	Political Action Group- Friends of Atiku.

Table 6 below presents the essential elements and features of the campaign including the semiotic interpretation and meanings etc. The wording or caption- Vote Alh. Atiku Abubakar for A Nigeria For ALL. Semiotically, the copy presents some features or elements such as theme, subject matter, intention, style and advertiser etc. In the context of the theme, the campaign shows that collective involvement or action is required to transform Nigeria, while the subject matter focuses on the fact that everyone is needed to drive the economy of Nigeria for better prospects- inclusiveness. To convince the audience that Nigeria belongs to everybody, and that voting PDP into power will benefit all the people represents the intention of the campaign. Furthermore, the advertising copy used many elements like the logo of the party, colour, upper and lower font sizes, space and Atiku's picture and the advertiser is PDP.

Table 6: Wording - Vote Alh. Atiku Abubakar for A Nigeria For ALL.

5 Analysis categories	
Theme	Collective involvement as well as action is required to transform Nigeria.
Subject matter	Everyone is needed to drive the economy of Nigeria for better prospects- inclusiveness.
Intention	To convince the audience that Nigeria belongs to everybody, voting PDP into power will benefit all.
Style	Advertising copy used elements like logo, colour, space, upper and lower font sizes and Atiku's picture
Advertiser	PDP

Table 7 below presents the semiotic interpretation of the campaign as well as the elements and features embodied in the campaign. These include theme, the subject matter, intention, style and advertiser etc. The wording: Let's Us Fix Nigeria. Kicker..... we stand with Atiku/Obi, Wike/Banigo. A Presidential/Governorship branding. The theme of this campaign is to reposition Nigeria better from all the ills plaguing her and the citizens. The subject matter focuses on the developmental issue- to rebuild Nigeria and make her work well again- revitalization of all sectors for socio-economic growth. This also extends to Rivers State. Voting for Atiku is also voting for Wike and his running mate. The campaign intends to convince the voters to join hands in rebuilding the nation and Rivers State through collective action and collaboration. Elements like font sizes, colour, logo of the party, four pictures of the candidates- Atiku, Obi, Wike, Banigo and a picture of a group of political action groups were used to convey the message. The advertiser is the South-South Vanguard Political Action Group.

Table 7 Wording: Let Us Fix Nigeria. Kicker: We stand with Atiku/Obi, Wike/Banigo.

5 Analysis categories	
Theme	To reposition Nigeria better from all the ills plaguing her and the citizenry.
Subject matter	Developmental issue- to rebuild Nigeria and make her work well again. This also extends to Rivers State.
Intention	To convince the voters to join hands in rebuilding the nation and Rivers State.
Style	Elements like font sizes, colour, logo, four pictures of the candidates- Atiku, Obi, Wike, Banigo and a picture of the Political Action Group were used
Advertiser	PDP.

Table 8 below shows the elements and features as well as deep and surface meanings embodied in the campaign. The caption or wording- (a) Restructure to unleash our great potential. Kicker.. Governance is more serious than politics. We have the theme, subject matter, intention, style and advertiser as metrics for the analysis of the campaign. The theme focuses on unbundling Nigeria which will create great potential and enhance productivity, and the subject matter addresses developmental issues as re-engineering the nation for economic growth has become a national issue, and governance is a serious business that requires strategic thinking and planning. The style of the campaign presents a multi-strategic action that employs elements like the picture of the advertiser, Atiku, Obi, party logo, and both lower and upper fonts to convey the message and with a catchy slogan. The campaign intends to convince or persuade the audience that restructuring the nation will benefit all. The advertiser is Integrity Group. Wording (b)- These ones are tested. Kicker. Facts don't lie. The theme of the campaign focuses on the fact that leadership is anchored on experience, exposure and contribution. The subject matter addresses indices for economic development are evidence-based as lies are created, and facts are sacred. The campaign intends to convince voters that indices or metrics for measuring performance in governance are evidenced-based, all these attributes are possessed by the candidates of PDP. The campaign also embodies many elements and styles such as pictures of Atiku/Obi, good colour combination, party logo, font arrangements and catchy slogan. The advertiser is Integrity Group. (c) Wording: Face of New Dawn. The theme in this campaign is that Nigeria needs new political leaders to achieve sustainable development, and the enthronement of a new political space i.e., infusion of a new political system and agenda as against the APC's change agenda forms the subject matter. The campaign intends to highlight to the audience the importance of embracing a new democratic ideal and culture, where hope or expectation is prioritized. The copy made use of many elements such as colour combination, the party's logo, Atiku/Obi pictures, a few words, characterization of fonts, space etc. The use of few elements or words is to allow the audience to decide while the slogan appears unattractive. The advertiser is Integrity Group.

Table 8: A composite advertising campaign

(A)Wording- Restructure to unleash our great potential. Kicker- Governance is more serious than politics.

5 Analysis categories	
Theme	Unbundling Nigeria will create great potential and enhance productivity
Subject matter	Developmental issue/critical matters such as re-engineering the nation for economic growth has become a national issue, and good governance is a serious business that requires strategic thinking and planning.
Intention	To convince the audience that restructuring the nation will benefit all.
Style	A multi-strategic campaign that has 3 ad copies that embody elements like the picture of the advertiser, Atiku, Obi, logo, and both lower and upper fonts to convey the message and with a catchy slogan.
Advertiser	Integrity Group

Table 8(B): These Ones are tested. Kicker: Facts don't lie.

5 Analysis categories	
Theme	Leadership is anchored on experience and contribution.
Subject matter	Indices for economic developments are evidence-based, as lies are created and facts sacred.
Intention	To convince voters that indices or metrics for measuring performance in governance are evidence-based, all these attributes are possessed by the candidate of PDP.
Style	Pictures of Atiku/Obi, good colour combination, logo, font arrangements, and catchy slogans were used.
Advertiser	Integrity Group

Table 8(C): Wording- Face of New Dawn.

Theme	Nigeria requires new political leaders to achieve sustainable development
Subject matter	Development of a new order in political space- infusion of a new political system/agenda as against the APC's change agenda
Intention	To highlight to the audience the importance of embracing a new democratic ideal and culture, where hope and expectation are prioritized.
Style	Colour combination, logo of the party, Atiku/Obi pictures, few words, characterization of fonts, space usage etc. featured.
Advertiser	Integrity Group.

Semiotic Analysis of APC Presidential Candidate Branding

Table 9 below shows the features or elements in the advertising campaign which are analyzed using 5 key indices such as theme, subject matter, intention, style and advertiser etc Wording: next level. Kicker: Vote Buhari/Osibanjo. The theme of the campaign is tenure elongation and the subject matter focuses on continuity of leadership for consolidation. The campaign intends to persuade the electorate to vote APC into power for another four years. Lots of elements and features were used such as candidates' pictures- Buhari and Osibanjo, bold fonts, colour and space and short punchy captions. The advertiser is APC.

Table 9: Wording; next level. Kicker..vote Buhari/Osibanjo

Theme	The theme of the campaign is tenure elongation.
Subject matter	The subject matter focuses on continuity of leadership for consolidation.
Intention	To persuade the electorate to vote APC into power for another four years.

Style	Lots of elements were used such as candidates' pictures- Buhari and Osibanjo, bold fonts, colour, space, and short punchy captions featured.
Advertiser	APC

Table 10 below shows the characteristics and elements embodied in the campaign including the five metrics for the analysis of the content of the copy. Wording/slogan: Rail Revolution... Lagos-Abuja- Kano-PH. Kicker: Next level. The subject matter of the campaign focuses on developmental issues i.e. strides in the transportation sector, while the intention is to persuade voters to vote for APC because of the strides in rail transportation. The appeal is that rail transportation which started earlier would be intensified for greater efficiency and full utilization. The next level seen in this copy represents a story slogan for APC's agenda, literally meaning continuity. The style of the campaign focuses on presidential candidate branding that makes use of logo, space, colour, pictures of Buhari, Osibanjo, rail, and capital fonts to convey the message to the audience. Next level, artistically designed pointing upwards, represents progression, a symbolic appeal that the APC used to counter the PDP agenda. The advertiser is a Political Action Group- PYO Support group. The campaign lacks a theme.

Table 10: Wording: Rail Revolution... Lagos- Abuja- Kano- PH. Kicker..next level

Theme	None
Subject matter	Developmental issues- strides in the transportation sector etc
Intention	To persuade voters to vote for APC because of the strides in rail transportation, the appeal is that rail transportation which started earlier would be intensified for greater efficiency and full utilization. The next level seen in this copy represents a strong slogan for APC's agenda, literally meaning continuity.
Style	This is a presidential branding that made use of logo, space, colour, picture of Buhari, Osibanjo, rail, and capital fonts to convey the message to the audience.
Advertiser	Political Action Group- PYO Support Group

Table 11 below shows the five key metrics such as theme, subject matter, intention, style and advertising adopted in analyzing the content of the campaign. Wording: 1.5 million Nigerians empowered. Kicker: Next level. The theme of the campaign is to support traders, farmers and operators of small-scale businesses through free-interest loan initiatives. The subject matter is a developmental issue that focuses on financial support to traders, and farmers. The campaign intends to persuade voters to vote for APC to continue the empowerment initiatives for the people. A catchy campaign that seeks to use the gains and benefits of empowerment initiatives to canvas for votes was adopted while elements like the party's logo, captivating texts, colour, space and upper fonts were used. The advertiser is a Political Action Group- Ambode Support Group.

Table 11: Wording 1.5 million Nigerians empowered. Kicker... next level

Theme	Supporting of traders, farmers and operators of small-scale businesses through free-interest loan initiatives.
Subject matter	Developmental issue that focuses on financial support to traders, artisans and farmers.

Intention	To persuade voters to vote for APC to continue the empowerment initiatives for the people.
Style	A catchy campaign that seeks to use the gains and benefits of empowerment initiatives to canvass for votes. Elements like logos, captivating texts, colour, space, and upper fonts were used.
Advertiser	Political Action Group- Ambode Support Group

Table 12 below presents the analysis of the campaign involving 5 key metrics such as theme, subject matter, intention, style and the advertiser. The wording/slogan: Light Up Nigeria. Vote Buhari/Osibanjo...Kicker: Next level. In this campaign, the theme is to tackle the electricity problem or power problem. The subject matter is a developmental type that focuses on the increase in the capacity of power generation to convince the prospective voters to vote for APC to enjoy increased power supply in the country representing the intention of the campaign. A simple presidential candidate branding that used a few elements such as logo, colour, space and big fonts and pictures of Buhari/Osibanjo constitute some aspects of the style. The caption or wording: light up Nigeria, is a well-thought-out appeal strategy that urged voters to cast their votes for APC for improved power supply. The advertiser is a Political Action Group- PYO.

Table 12: Wording/Slogan: Light Up Nigeria. vote Buhari/Osibanjo. Kicker next level

Theme	Power problem to be tackled
Subject matter	Developmental issues bordering on the increase or the capacity of power generation.
Intention	To convince the electorate to vote for APC to enjoy increased power supply in the country.
Style	A simple presidential candidate branding that used a few elements such as logo, colour, space, and big fonts as well as pictures of Buhari/Osibanjo to convey the message.
Advertiser	Political Action Group.

Table 13 below shows an interesting food campaign strategy by the APC to convince the electorate to vote for their party. This is a hunger campaign strategy that will appeal to the voters due to hunger and hardship. The campaign used five key indices such as intention, subject matter, style, theme and advertiser. The wording: A Meal a Day. 9.3 million pupils in 24 states. Kicker.. next level. The theme of the campaign is a meal subsidy for pupils in Nigeria, and the subject matter focuses on economic issues bordering on the reduction of hunger among pupils. The campaign aims to persuade the audience to vote for APC because of its agenda of reducing hunger amongst pupils in Nigeria through a meal subsidy program. The campaign used a lot of elements such as the party's logo, a picture of a beneficiary, pictures of Buhari/Osibanjo, upper fonts, space usage and a combination of colours. The appeal is to attract public attention in relation to the ongoing food subsidy program of APC's agenda in Nigeria which 9.3 million pupils were said to have benefitted. The advertiser is a Political Action Group- PYO.

Table 13: Wording: A Meal a Day. 9.3 million pupils in 24 states. Kicker... next level

Theme	Meal subsidy for pupils in Nigeria.
Subject matter	Economic issues bordering on the reduction of hunger amongst pupils.
Intention	To persuade the audience to vote for APC because of its agenda of reducing hunger amongst pupils in Nigeria through a meal subsidy program.
Style	Elements used include- the party's logo, a picture of a beneficiary, a picture of Buhari/Osibanjo, upper fonts, space and colour.
Advertiser	Political Action Group- PYO

Table 14 below shows the characteristics of the content of the advertising copy as the keys for the analysis of the campaign. These include- theme, subject matter, intention, style and the sponsor/or advertiser. The wording: Katsina Sai Dan Katsina Mata Wallen (Hausa meaning- Katsina is for the indigene of the state). The campaign has no discernable or clear theme, as well as subject matter. The campaign intends to appeal to the indigenes of Katsina State to cast their votes for their son- Buhari for President and Masari for governor. Semiotically, the campaign is that the indigenes of the state are the owners of the state, voting for Buhari is only fulfilling this ancestral attachment and connection, but also an indication that charity begins at home. Furthermore, it reminded the electorate that voting for a non-indigene is tantamount to a waste of votes. As part of the style, a dominant element in the campaign is the use of local dialect, logo, colour, pictures, space, and bold and upper fonts. The campaign also lacks a theme and subject matter. The advertiser is a Political Action Group- Musawa Support Group.

Table 14: Wording: Katsina Sai Dan Katsina Matawallen (Hausa meaning- Katsina is for the indigenes of the State)

Theme	The campaign has no theme
Subject matter	It lacks subject matter
Intention	To appeal to the indigenes of Kastina to cast their votes to their son- Buhari for president and Masari for governor. It appeals to or reminds the electorate that voting for a non-indigene is a waste of vote
Style	A dominant element in the campaign is the use of local dialect, others are the party's logo, colour, picture, bold and upper fonts.
Advertiser	Political Action Group- Musawa Support Group.

Table 15 below also presents catchy visual, and artistic elements and features of the campaign and the metrics with which they are analyzed, and these include- intention, subject matter, style, theme and the advertiser. Wording: South East for Buhari. Kicker: Enugu State for Ben Eche, Together we can. The campaign has no theme as well as subject matter, but the intention is to convince the South Eastern States, especially Enugu indigenes to vote for Buhari for president and Eche for governor of Enugu state. The campaign style shows a combined presidential candidate branding involving Buhari and Eche for governor of Enugu State. Semiotic elements featured prominently in the campaign such as the party's logo, space, pictures of Buhari and Eche, colour, and upper and lower fonts- a mixture of characters. This two-fold campaign wanted the South East especially Enugu indigenes to cast their votes for Buhari and Eche for governor. It was also another strategy that wanted all the 5 Eastern states to support APC. The advertiser is the South East for Buhari (SEB).

Table 15: Wording: South -South for Buhari. Kicker: Enugu State for Ben Eche, Together we can

Theme	None
Subject matter	None
Intention	To convince the South Eastern States especially Enugu state indigenes to vote for Buhari for president and Eche for governor of Enugu state.
Style	A combined presidential candidate involving Buhari and Eche for governor of Enugu state. Elements that featured prominently in the campaign are logo, space, picture of the candidates (Buhari and Eche), and upper and lower fonts.
Advertiser	South East for Buhari (SEB).

Table 16 below shows the elements and characteristics embodied in the campaign including the keys for the analysis of the advertising campaign which include- the theme, subject matter, intention, style and the advertiser. Wording: Support Buhari's Anti-Corruption war. Kicker: The Fruits Are Evident ... Nigeria must be better. The campaign theme is that good governance will guarantee a corruption-free society. The subject matter focuses on the developmental issue that borders on war against corruption, to persuade the Nigerian eligible voters to support Buhari for improved war against corruption is the intention of the campaign. This is a composite campaign that focuses on certain sectors or segments of the economy that are ravaged by corruption, which the APC agenda would address if voted into power. The style of the campaign centres on a multi-strategic campaign with ten programs that APC has started which they would continue to execute if voted into power again. All the issues were captured in one ad copy so that at a glance, the voter would remember them and make decisions. Upper and lower fonts are effectively utilized to create imaginative thinking relating to the ten issues the campaign highlighted- colour, space, party's logo, and pictures are also used to influence voters' decisions and opinions. The advertiser is Buhari Coalition 2019.

Table 16: Wording: Support Buhari's Anti-Corruption war. Kicker: The Fruits Are Evident...Nigeria must be better

Theme	Good governance will guarantee a corruption-free society.
Subject matter	Developmental issue that borders on war against corruption.
Intention	To persuade the voters to support Buhari in the war against corruption. This is a composite campaign that focuses on certain sectors or segments of the economy that the APC would address if voted into power.
Style	This is a multi-strategic campaign with ten programs, all the issues are captured into one ad copy. Colour, space, logo, and pictures are used to influence voters' decisions.
Advertiser	Buhari Coalition 2019.

Summary, Conclusion, Recommendations

The analysis of data has revealed several issues relating to the research questions raised in this study. One such issue is the type of outdoor campaign and method the two political parties (PDP and APC) and their agents used for the 2019 presidential campaign. It was revealed that the two parties adopted a lot of the below-the-line communication approaches as well as posters, billboards, hoardings, flyers, body and

handbills etc. It was seen that messages contained in these campaigns were created to address issues relating to the philosophies, manifestoes, programs and policies of the political parties. Some of the messages and wordings lack theme, or subject matter, while some address developmental and critical issues. It was observed that all the contents had sufficient intentions and styles, which most of the time, evoked feelings, thoughts and passions for the electorate in their voting decisions and opinions. It was also revealed that the two political parties created and developed their own campaigns, while on the other hand, political action groups or committees of friends of the candidates created similar campaigns in support of their candidates. Specifically, most of the PDP and APC campaigns were created by the parties themselves or powered by the associates of the candidates. It was further revealed that the two political parties (PDP and APC) employed outdoor advertising for many reasons. They used outdoor campaigns for political mobilization, and participation, creating general awareness of parties, philosophies, manifestoes, opinions, beliefs, and concepts as well as engaging the public on political discourses and issues. Also, the two political parties used outdoor campaigns to gauge or assess the level of preparedness of the electorate, and how the voters perceive the ideologies of the candidates. It was shown that semiotics have great impacts on the outdoor campaign, especially with regard to the 2019 Presidential campaigns used by the PDP and APC. It was noticed that all the campaigns created by the two political parties have outside or original levels of presentation (surface and deep meanings). The styles of the campaigns drew much inspiration and insight from semiotics. All the elements- wording, language, colour, space, illustration, picture, image, font, text, code, logo, and other symbolic illustrations and designs in the campaigns conveyed different meanings to different electorates. As semiotics is not separated from both commercial and political advertising aggregates of semiotic features were seen or used in the campaign messages either knowingly or unknowingly by both parties. Some of the dominant wordings or slogans found in APC campaigns include the following: 4+4, next level, broom, etc. This imagery (semiotics) 4+4 and next level and broom are non-verbal uses of sign language. They are essentially meant to convey the desire to support Buhari's re-election bid. The separate 4 fingers displayed conspicuously are representatives of each of the four years of the two terms the Nigerian Constitution stipulates for the president. The APC use of "broom" in its logo, symbolizes readiness to sweep or clean the Augean stable. It was observed that the "4+4" campaign sign goes hand in hand with the occasional sign of "next level" Semiotically, the next level is the campaign road map of the ruling APC launched in Nov 2018. With the victory of Buhari in the election, it is seen that it is safe to consider the sign as one of the most portent of the election period.

On the other hand, the dominant semiotic elements and features in the PDP advertising campaigns are- "Articulated", let's get Nigeria working again, "Umbrella", etc. Short after former Nigeria's Vice-President Atiku Abubakar emerged candidate of the opposition PDP at its convention in Port Harcourt in 2018, the internet was awash with posts and comments expressing support for his candidature. A subtle campaign message was also launched to show that Mr. Abubakar was more articulate and had a better grasp of issues plaguing Nigeria than his major challenger, especially Buhari etc. It was also not surprising to hear Nigerians say they are articulated, while the campaign materials carried "Articulated", in reference to throwing their support for Mr Abubakar, widely known among Nigerians as "ATIKU". Another dominant semiotic wording found in the

PDP campaign is "Let's get Nigeria working again". This is a campaign strategy to counter the APC's failed agenda. The PDP maintained that the economy nosedived and cascaded into recession with Nigeria being declared the world's poverty capital, insecurity worsened with the emergence or re-invigorating of the killer herdsmen and banditry, aside from kidnapping and Boko Haram insurgents which hitherto held sway and corruption never abated but aggravated, hence, the slogan, Let's get Nigeria working again, with a sub-slogan or kicker "change the change". The PDP adopted the "Umbrella" as its logo which symbolizes cover, protection, inclusiveness and welfare of citizens and ready to return "power to the people"

Summary

The study shows that the use of outdoor campaign materials by the two parties was profound, and the campaign for the election did not start as early as in the 2015 presidential campaigns. In addition to the use of well-known campaign materials, the two parties further adopted smaller temporary outdoor formats both in sizes and shapes which the parties placed side by side running commercial campaigns for other non-political brands. The use of some of the smaller temporary outdoor formats such as A-frames etc. reduced huge billings from political campaigns. The study revealed that some level of partisanship among the regulating agencies directly or indirectly stifled opposition parties from displaying their campaigns. Also, the study indicated that the two main political parties engaged the service of professionals such as outdoor agencies and other traditional advertising agencies. However, in some cases, proxies were used by the parties to produce advertising media outlets. Although the campaigns did not start early and the parties adopted proxies to achieve some of the campaigns' aims, the outdoor campaign on the general vote, appeared to have a considerably high impact on the presidential campaign as indicated by the level of media war space among the two political parties and the outcome. More importantly, the study revealed that signs, symbols, images, words, colours, aesthetic arts, graphic designs, animations, photographs etc. are among the essential elements employed by the two political parties in the presidential campaigns, leaving the Nigerian voter to interpret the embedded meanings either outside or original. Interpretatively, and in line with the position of semiotics in advertising, the two parties employed a wide range of elements and symbolic materials in their outdoor campaigns. It was found out messages, slogans, and symbols conveyed by the PDP advertisement focused on regaining/reclaiming power from APC and returning power to the people, and the major messages and slogans in the APC advertisement focused more on continuity and cleaning the Augean stable.

Conclusion

The study concludes that political advertisements are not a new phenomenon in Nigeria's quest for a democratic process. Over the years, political campaigns using outdoor systems and approaches have facilitated significantly in deepening of political activities in Nigeria. Between 1959 and 1964 political activities in Nigeria, skywriting and trails which are aspects of outdoor campaign approaches were among the media campaigns adopted by Chief Obafemi Awolowo. From the early days till date, political activities in Nigeria have witnessed a tremendous outpouring of out-of-home campaigns. The presidential campaigns in the 2019 election in Nigeria saw a high level of political awareness and activities which were characterized by a lot of outdoor campaigns among

the two major parties. As critical in advertising, the two parties engaged and used outdoor campaign strategies to mobilize the Nigerian voters as well as creatively positioning their billboards to strategic locations and sites that attracted the attention of the electorate. The two political parties used the instruments of the state to disrupt and block billboards of the opposition parties from states where they have state governors and are considered to be their strongholds. In such states, the state's signage agencies refused to give permits for display, or where the owners of the billboard insist on displaying campaign materials of opposing parties, they attacked the business from all directions including arbitrary revocation of their licenses and other unwholesome acts to cripple the owners of the billboard. Political thugs were often used to destroy billboards and campaign materials of the opposing party, and it was a common trend that characterized the campaigns. Equally disturbing is the fact that some of the outdoor campaign materials were used by the two parties without approval or safety consideration, and some pasted campaign materials indiscriminately. The two parties in their desperate efforts to win by all means, threw caution to the winds by flouting the laws regulating advertising, for example, the two parties bypassed APCON and other internal regulatory agencies and displayed campaign materials that were not approved.

Recommendations

The study recommends that parties, politicians, political action groups, key state actors and non-state actors should appreciate the invaluable contributions of semiotics in outdoor campaigns in the democratic process, which is an integral aspect of advertising and linguistics. APCON and other internal regulatory bodies in the advertising industry should be properly equipped and given free hands to professionally carry out their assignments without interference, and parties that flout the laws should be sanctioned properly through stiffer penalties. Overseeing and managing outdoor advertising should be handled by the local governments. A situation where most state governments usurp the constitutional role of outdoor advertising from local governments poses a great danger to the industry.

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