



## Perspectives on Celebrity Endorsements in Electioneering Political Advertising in Nigeria (1999-2023)

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### ABSTRACT:

**Objective:** The objective of this study is to examine the concept, forms, prospects and challenges of celebrity endorsements in political advertising in Nigeria.

**Conceptual Framework:** In this topic, the main concepts that underpin the study are presented. The preponderance of celebrity endorsements in electioneering political advertising, nature, and approaches stand out, providing a solid basis for understanding the context of the investigation.

**Method:** The methodology adopted for this study comprises a longitudinal design involving content analysis of literature on celebrity endorsements and political advertising and observation of political campaigns/advertisements involving celebrity-endorsers in Nigeria from 1999 to 2023.

**Results and Conclusion:** The results revealed that celebrity endorsements of candidates/parties in political advertisements in Nigeria have increased since the return to democracy in 1999. These endorsements are mostly theme songs, video clips and physical presence in campaign rallies/concerts and helped to gain voters' attention, inject excitement into the campaign, aid message recall and give the political advertisements strong appeals. However, some of these endorsements fail because some voters perceive them as mere entertainment, distraction from core campaign issues and waste of money among others.

**Research Implications:** The implications of this study are discussed, showing how the results can be applied to influence how candidates/parties, celebrities and the public perceive celebrity endorsements in electioneering political advertising in Nigeria.

**Originality/Value:** This study contributes to the literature by providing insights into the preponderance, forms, prospects and challenges of celebrity endorsements in political advertising in Nigeria and recommends how the practice can be improved.

### KEYWORDS:

Celebrity-endorser; Electorate; General election; Campaigns; Candidates.



## 1) INTRODUCTION

The practice of political advertising is no longer new in Nigeria and many parts of the world. This follows from the observation by Liu and Jeffres (2012) that advertising is a primary tool used by candidates in election to communicate with voters. Political advertising generally refers to the use of advertising principles and practices to promote political interests and ideologies. According to Grusell and Nord (2010), it is any form of controlled message conveyed through appropriate channels by individuals, political parties, groups, governments and other organizations desiring to promote their political interests. Political advertising therefore embraces all forms of sponsored creative messages conveyed through conventional and unconventional media designed to promote political interests/issues not necessarily connected to elections (Bovee & Arens, 1986).

Political advertisements specially designed for election campaigns are known as electioneering political advertisements, which refer to the application of advertising in all its ramifications to convey campaign messages to the public in a bid to attract votes (Ijeh, 2011). From observation, political advertising is more prominent during electioneering campaigns in Nigerian than any other period. The prevalence of electioneering political advertising in Nigeria can be rationalized from the observation of Jamieson and Campbell (2001) that it is the most important means through which candidates for general elections disseminate their campaign messages to voters. Electioneering political advertising is crucial to partisan politics as it provides political office seekers with opportunities to explore the ubiquitous, cumulative and consonance-oriented benefits of the media to deliver their campaign messages to the electorate to promote their political values in order to be accepted and voted into power (Batta, Batta & Mboho, 2015; Ojekwe, 2016; Ijeh & Oji, 2020).

The business of advertising generally is driven by innovations and creativities aimed at improving effectiveness of advertisements and persuading target audiences to accept advertisers' messages. One of such innovations is celebrity endorsement, which has become a common marketing communication strategy and creative tool (Abdulla & Keenan 2015, Ufuophu-Biri & Ijeh 2021). Celebrity endorsement as a marketing and advertising strategy, involves superstars, renowned public figures or personalities who use their fame and social status to help create awareness of and promote products, services, groups, personalities and ideas among others (PR Nigeria, 2018). Celebrity endorsement in electioneering political advertisements refers to the expression of public support for a political candidate by a person who is not necessarily a politician but is famous in the music, sports, movie or media industry among others and is influential within the electorate (Brubaker, 2011; Ijeh & Ogiagbepha, 2019). This phenomenon has become common practice as celebrity-endorsers are now often engaged to use their personalities, popularities and wide acceptance to support advertisement messages (Nyarko, Asimah, Agbemava & Tsetse, 2015).

Celebrities refer to people who enjoy public recognition as a result of distinctive attributes, attractiveness and trustworthiness. They are usually actors/actresses, sportsmen/women, models, media personalities, musicians, businessmen/women and politicians among others (Kuma & Hundal, 2015; Nyarko et al, 2015). Celebrities can be classified into three broad categories viz:

- Hero: Those who become famous as a result of admired accomplishments;
- Star: Those who develop the image of fame beyond their actual professional importance;
- Quasar: Those who become famous as a result of chance development which brings them excessive attention (Abdulla & Keenan 2015).

Irrespective of the category, a celebrity-endorser, as described above, belongs, he/she must be a famous and influential person who is admired and much-talked-about in the society.

Many contemporary advertisements engage celebrity-endorsers to promote products, ideologies, services and causes. This development suggests that many parts of the world may have become so entrenched in the aura of celebrities to the extent that people now rely on their opinions to take important decisions (Brubaker, 2011). There seems to be a general consensus that celebrity-endorsers, who are well known and respected persons, tend to have great effects on public acceptance and positive response to advertisement messages especially when members of the public easily identify with them (Saouma and Chabo, 2005). Celebrity endorsement is employed in all spheres of advertising including electioneering political advertisements all over the world.

In spite of the fact that electioneering political advertisements in Nigeria have featured celebrity-endorsers, there does not seem to have been enough effort to explore the phenomenon in order to fully understand the concept from a Nigerian perspective. According to Agyepong (2017), existing literature on celebrity endorsement in politics generally tend to focus on established western democracies with little investigation on new and emerging democracies especially in Africa. This study is an attempt to explore the phenomenon of celebrity endorsements in electioneering political advertising in Nigeria in a bid to enrich existing literature on the concept, forms, prospects and challenges from a Nigerian perspective.

## 2) CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

### Overview of Electioneering Political Advertising in Nigeria

Electioneering political advertising in Nigeria has evolved into a multi-billion-naira industry as political parties spend huge sums of money on campaigns. Evidence arrived at via campaign spending tracking and monitoring by the election umpire – Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) indicates that the two major political parties in the country – All People’s Congress (APC) and People’s Democratic Party (PDP) – spent as much as N7.7 billion and N7.9 billion on campaigns for only the presidential elections in 2015 and 2019 respectively (Table 1). Though the figures of campaign expenditures for the 2023 election are not yet available, it is not expected to be less given the prediction that it was going to be the costliest election in Nigeria’s history so far (Onwuamaeze 2022).

**Table 1: Presidential Electioneering Campaign Spending by the Two Leading Political Parties in Nigeria.**

Election Year	APC	PDP	TOTAL
2015	N2.9b	N4.8b	N7.7b
2019	N4.6b	N3.3b	N7.9b
2023	NA	NA	NA

(Source: Ekwuraju 2015; Abdallah, 2018; Oguntola 2022a; Oguntola 2022b)

A substantial part of these figures was expended on electioneering political advertising in all its ramifications and the rationale for this huge expenditure derives from the postulation by Jamieson and Campbell (2001) that advertising is the primary means through which candidates and political parties disseminate their campaign messages to voters during general elections. Also, electioneering political advertising presents the political parties/candidates opportunities to inform and educate the

electorate of their plans if voted into power, which with creativity also entertains to provide amusement for target audience thereby increasing 'Top of mind awareness' (TOMA) for the candidates/parties and manifestoes amongst the populace (Nworah 2019; Ijeh & Oji 2020).

This is largely because since advertising is paid for, political parties/politicians in Nigeria find it very easy to rely on it to say exactly what they want to say in their own words, from their own perspectives on their chosen media of mass communication without interference from journalists (Ijeh, 2012). Politicians-cum-sponsors of electioneering political advertisements conceptualize, initiate, develop and package the messages and even decide which mass media would convey them, specific broadcast time and frequency of transmission; specific newspaper and magazine pages and issues; specific billboards, banners and posters locations, sizes and layouts and specific online platforms and formats, depending on what they can afford (Ijeh, 2010).

The business of electioneering political advertising in Nigeria has come of age with the sustenance of democratic governance that allows for general elections at regular intervals since the advent of this present democratic dispensation in May, 1999. This is the first time in the political history of Nigeria that general elections have held consecutively for two decades. Political parties and candidates for general elections in Nigeria seem to work on the premise that one of the good ways to win public acceptance is to secure the massive support of voters hence they continually improve strategies to woo them through electioneering political advertisements. No wonder Abramson, Arterton and Orren (1998) argue that electioneering political advertisements are messages specially crafted to seduce voters to vote in desired ways and for desired candidates/political parties in general elections.

Electioneering political advertising is very pervasive during campaigns for general elections in Nigeria as conventional and unconventional advertising channels are awash with political advertisements urging the electorate to vote (or refrain from voting) for different candidates/parties overtly or covertly. This suggests that Nigerian politicians recognize the importance of political branding and marketing in winning votes hence they increasingly make use of technical advertising and marketing ideologies to persuade the electorate to vote for them in general elections (Umoren & Ihechu, 2018).

Another major reason for the preponderance of electioneering political advertising in Nigeria lies in the notion that an appreciable number of non-partisan voters and even some party members, who are not strong in their loyalties, may decide who to vote for during the campaigns (Ijeh, 2012). Candidates/parties contesting general elections therefore spare no effort to persuade these undecided voters and even convert voters who have made up their minds to vote for rival candidates/parties. Against this background, the terrain of electioneering political advertising in Nigeria could be described as a battlefield for votes which candidates and political parties extensively explore to contend with the ever-mercurial and changing electorate political behaviour, attitudes and needs in the complex and dynamic political environment during general elections (Ezeudu, 2003).

The approaches in electioneering political advertisements are as diverse as the objectives of the advertisers. According to Ijeh (2012), electioneering political advertisements in Nigeria advance the argument that certain candidates and/or political parties possess (or lack) clear understanding of the business of governance. Others attempt to convince the electorate that certain candidates/political

parties are knowledgeable (or ignorant) of how to resolve pressing societal issues while some explore candidates' and their parties' past and present experiences and proclivities to promote their perceived competences or otherwise. Electioneering political advertising in Nigeria is also said to draw attention to the cultural affinities of candidates by direct or subtle emphasis on tribe, languages/dialects spoken, traditional dressing, place of birth/upbringing/abode, marital links, chieftaincy title(s), and religion. In addition to the above approaches in electioneering political advertising, the use of celebrities to endorse candidates and/or political parties during campaigns is noticeable in Nigeria and that is the thrust of this study.

### **3) METHODOLOGY**

This conceptual paper relied on secondary data sourced from existing literature on celebrity endorsements and electioneering political advertisements in Nigeria and beyond. The researchers also drew insights from observations of electioneering political campaign/advertisements involving celebrity-endorsers in Nigeria from the return to democratic rule in 1999 to 2023.

### **4) RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

#### **Growth of Celebrity Endorsements in Electioneering Political Advertising in Nigeria**

Results of this study indicate that the growth in the use of celebrity endorsements in electioneering political advertising in Nigeria is a product of the need to improve on appeals to woo voters. As Nigerian politicians increasingly appreciate the importance of political branding and marketing as a science to win votes, they naturally began to explore successful marketing communication strategies which include celebrity endorsements (Umoren and Ihechu, 2018). There is no doubt that celebrity endorsement has been established to be a successful marketing communication strategy and creative tool which has become increasingly common in recent times (Abdulla & Keenan, 2015). The philosophy behind the phenomenon of celebrity endorsements in advertising generally lies in the strong belief among advertisers that by hiring celebrities to feature in their advertisements, the celebrities' meanings, successes and qualities could automatically transfer to their brands and products, thus translating into positive campaign results (PR Nigeria 2018, Ufuophu-Biri & Ijeh 2021).

Nigerian celebrities have featured in electioneering political advertisements to demonstrate their endorsements of candidates/political parties. Celebrity endorsements in electioneering political advertising in Nigeria is relatively a new phenomenon which kicked-off in this millennium (Ojekwe, 2016). However, even though a relatively new development in Nigeria which does enjoy huge fanfare like in the USA, it has grown appreciably. Records suggest that celebrity involvement in electioneering campaigns in Nigeria became pronounced following the situation where about 194 celebrities worked towards the election of the first US black president, Barak Obama in 2009. This was viewed as an action premised basically on the need to bring change and the trend was followed in Nigeria in the 2011 general elections where the creative industry in the country queued behind President Goodluck Jonathan who won eventually. Since then, Nigerian celebrities have assumed prominent roles in candidates'/political parties' electioneering political advertisements as they are being increasingly engaged as political communication tools. Most of them are now campaign officers who go about endorsing politicians with the understanding that their popularity and influence would compel or woo voters to accept their endorsed candidates even without giving reasons for their endorsements (Anazia, 2015).



Many Nigerian celebrities have overtly or covertly endorsed different candidates for elections. Among them are Onyeka Onwenu, Sam Okposo, Stephanie Okereke, Bob Manuel Udogwu, Segun Arinze, Felix Liberty, Yinka Davies, Daddy Showkey, D'Banj, Wande Coal, Weird MC and Sasha P, who helped to draw attention to the candidature of President Goodluck Jonathan, of the Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP) in 2011. An album: "*Goodluck Jonathan*" (featuring musical stars including Zaaki Adzee, Sunny Neji, Sammie Okposo, African China, Naeto C, 6ftPlus, Late Kefee, Waje, Tosin Martins, and Daddy Showkey) and "*I Believe In Goodluck Jonathan*" campaign (featuring top Nigerian actors/actresses such as Desmond Elliot; Ejike Asiegbu, Ngozi Nwosu, Clem Ohameze, Femi Brainard, Ufuoma Ejenobor, Nonso Diobi, Yul Edochie, Yemi Balq, Mercy Aigbe, Uche Ogbodo, Nuella Njudigbo, Maureen Solomon, Tony Umez, Uche Iwuji, Chinyere Winifred, Emeka Enyiocha, Benita Nzeribe, and Anne Macaulay among others) are good examples here. The Lagos State gubernatorial candidate of the then Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN), Babatunde Fashola, equally received electioneering endorsements from artistes and comedians such as P-Square, 2face Idibia, Banky W, Weird MC, WizKid, Darey, 9ice, Basket Mouth, SeyiLaw, Princess, Peace, Saheed Osupa, Sunny Neji, DJ Zeez, just as Kelly Hansome released a song titled, "*Say Yes To Amaechi*" to support Governor Rotimi Amaechi's second term bid for the office of Governor of Rivers State in 2011. Akinwumi Ambode during his campaign in the Lagos State gubernatorial election in 2015, explored celebrity endorsements extensively with Banky W, Desmond Elliot, Waje, MI, Ice Prince, Brymo, Patoranking, Funke Akindele (Jenifa), Olamide and Yemi Alade among others in the theme song "*Gbabe*", which rocked the air waves and became popular among the electorate in Lagos State during and after the campaign (Anazia, 2015; Ojekwe 2016; Onwu, 2018). It was also observed that during the 2023 electioneering campaigns, Chioma Jesus, a popular Nigerian gospel artist, performed live during the Atiku/Okowa presidential campaign rally in Asaba, the Delta State capital. Her performance at the campaign rally was widely advertised before the event as a way to encourage large turnout.

### **Forms of Celebrity Endorsement in Political Advertising in Nigeria**

The researchers observe that celebrity endorsements of candidates and political parties during general elections in Nigeria have come in different ways. Nigerian celebrities have featured in theme songs, video clips, appearance in campaign rallies and concerts all of which were advertised extensively on different advertising channels as electioneering political advertisements. Specific examples of these forms of celebrity endorsements in political advertising in Nigeria are examined below:

**a) Advertised Theme Songs** – Nigerian celebrity musicians have produced different tracks endorsing candidates/parties for election in the country which were adopted as theme songs for their electioneering campaigns and disseminated widely through spot advertisements on radio, television and online platforms. Notable is "*Goodluck Jonathan*" featuring Zaaki Adzee, Sunny Neji, Sammie Okposo, African China, Naeto C, 6ftPlus, Late Kefee, Waje, Tosin Martins, and Daddy Showkey among others in 2011 as well as "*Say Yes To Amaechi*" by Kelly Hansome in 2015 (Anazia, 2015). There is also "*Gbabe*" featuring Desmond Elliot, Ice Prince, MI, Olamide, Banky W, Funke Akindele, Uti Nwachukwu, Yemi Alade, Flavour and many others endorsing Akinwumi Ambode and APC candidates generally in 2015 (Anazia, 2015; Ojekwe, 2016). These songs were played widely on relevant radio and television stations in Nigeria on sponsored spots by the candidates and their parties as part of the electioneering political advertising.

**b) *Advertised Video Clips*** – Just as Nigerian musicians released campaign songs to endorse candidates, movie stars and other celebrities made endorsement video clips. Many versions of campaign videos by Nigeria entertainers endorsing Goodluck Ebele Jonathan, General Muhammadu Buhari, Akinwumi Ambode and his major rival - Jimi Agbaje of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) - were streamed on different cable channels in the country and online (Osazee-Odia & Ijeh 2012, Anazia, 2015). Of particular note is the “*I Believe in Goodluck Jonathan*” video clip, released in 2010 to endorse President Goodluck Jonathan for the 2011 general elections, which was filled with top Nigerian actors/actresses such as Desmond Elliot; Ejike Asiegbu, Ngozi Nwosu, Clem Ohameze, Femi Brainard, Ufuoma Ejenobor, Nonso Diobi, Yul Edochie, Yemi Balq and Mercy Aigbe among others (Anazia, 2015; YouTube, 2010). Another campaign video featuring Genevieve Nnaji, Ini Edo, Olu Jacobs, Monalisa Chinda, Ramsey Nouah, Desmond Elliot and Stephanie Okereke and was streamed online in 2010 (Anazia, 2015; BellaNaija, 2015). These video clips were adopted as campaign materials and widely televised and streamed online as part of sponsored electioneering political advertising by the endorsed candidates.

**c) *Advertised Appearance at Campaign Rallies*** – Another way that Nigerian celebrities have openly endorsed candidates is advertised appearance of the celebrities at campaign rallies. On many occasions, the fact that celebrities would attend (or attended) electioneering campaign rallies were widely advertised as a way to convince the electorate that the celebrities endorsed the candidates. The appearance of ace footballers – Kanu Nwankwo and Austin Jay Jay Okocha at Goodluck Jonathan's campaign rallies in Owerri and Enugu respectively were heavily advertised as indications of endorsements. Popular Nigerian movie star, Francis Duru, also led a group of Nigerian celebrities to attend the PDP rally at Eagle Square, Abuja, during the 2011 presidential election and even performed on stage (Anazia, 2015). As part of campaigns for the 2019 presidential election, APC invited an entertainer – Small Doctor – to perform on stage just as Davido also actively campaigned for PDP and his uncle in rallies in his state gubernatorial election (Onwu, 2018). Another example here is the live performance of ‘Chiomma Jesus’, a popular Christian artist, during the Atiku/Okowa 2023 presidential campaign rally in Asaba, the Delta State capital. These appearances at campaign rallies for the respective elections were heavily advertised before and after the event as evidence of celebrity endorsements.

**d) *Advertised Concerts*** – Nigerian music stars, comedians and other entertainers have also organized concerts to endorse different candidates for different general elections in the country. A good documented example here is the “*My City Rocks*” concert which took place in March 2011 at the Teslim Balogun Stadium in support of Babatunde Fashola's second term bid as governor of Lagos State. The widely advertised concert featured celebrities such as P-Square, 2face Idibia, Banky W, Weird MC, WizKid, Darey, 9ice, Basket Mouth, Seyi Law, Princess, Peace, Saheed Osupa, Sunny Neji, and DJ Zeez (Anazia, 2015; BellaNaija, 2015).

### **Prospects of Celebrity Endorsement in Electioneering Political Advertising in Nigeria**

The researchers observe that celebrity endorsements in electioneering political advertising in Nigeria has prospects in political branding and marketing in the country. These are mostly in the areas of gaining voters' attention; injecting excitement into the campaign; message recall and having strong appeals on fans of endorsing celebrities. These observed prospects are examined closely below:

**a) Attracting Attention** – The use of celebrity endorsements in advertising generally is useful in grabbing the attention of consumers (Veer; Becirovic & Martin, 2010, Ufuophu-Biri & Ijeh 2021). Celebrities are well-known public personalities and heads always turn towards them wherever they are recognized, even if they are silent and inactive. This ability of celebrities to attract attention is enhanced when they feature in advertisements that are primarily designed to attract attention. In advertising, it is widely believed that celebrities attract instant attention to advertisements than non-celebrities (Nyarko et al, 2015) and this is very correct in Nigeria. Candidates for elections usually have problems attracting attention to their electioneering political advertisements because of the lack of confidence that many non-partisan Nigerians have for politicians/political parties (Mboho, 2005). The engagement of celebrities in electioneering political advertisements is therefore one sure way to get the non-partisan voters in Nigeria to pay attention to their messages.

**b) Generation of Excitement** – In addition to attracting attention to the electioneering political advertisements, celebrity endorsements of candidates generate a lot of excitement. According to Political Studies Association [PSA] (2015), the use of celebrity endorsements during electioneering campaigns always generates excitements about endorsed candidates/political parties. Nigerian celebrities are mainly entertainers (movie stars, musicians and comedians) and as public performers, they excite people with their personalities and talents. There is usually no dull moment around them and this is transferred to the electioneering political advertisements where they feature to endorse candidates.

**c) Strong Appeal** – Celebrities are usually revered in the society and many people (especially their fans) tend to take anything they say or do seriously. Accordingly, their endorsements of candidates for elections have the prospect of increasing public interest in the candidates/parties (Veer et al, 2010). As the target audience of the electioneering political advertising becomes more interested in the advertisements, their reverence for the endorsing celebrities help endorsed candidates to gain some measure of personal appeal arising from his/her perceived association with the celebrity(s) (Political Studies Association, 2015). This is what Nyarko et al (2015) describe as the establishment of patterns of connectivity of celebrity personalities with the image of what is being advertised and this can provoke positive attitudinal and emotional reactions among members of the target audience. In the heat of possible emotional reactions, voters exposed to electioneering political advertisements featuring celebrities could perceive the celebrities as more credible than non-celebrities and could go ahead to adopt the message of the advertisement in an effort to identify with or emulate the endorsing celebrity.

**d) Message Recall** – Studies have shown that advertising audience tend to recall the advertisement messages easier when a celebrity is involved than otherwise. Ojekwe (2016) reports that 60.3% of respondents in a study indicated that the advertised theme song for the election campaign under focus featuring celebrities remained in their memories long after the elections. Nyarko et al (2015) draw attention to the fact that celebrities are omnipresent features of society who blaze lasting impression in the memories of all they come across hence the recall rate of advertisements featuring them is much higher than those without celebrities. This is a product of what Nworah (2019) describes as ‘Top of mind awareness’ (TOMA), which is heavily enhanced by the amusement provided by celebrity-endorsers (especially from the entertainment industry) who feature in electioneering political advertisements and skillfully combine provision of relevant campaign information/education with entertainment to target audience.



## Challenges of Celebrity Endorsement in Electioneering Political Advertising in Nigeria

Observations in this study indicate that, like many human endeavours, celebrity endorsements in electioneering political advertising in Nigeria has its drawbacks. These challenges are examined below under Perception of the advertisements as mere entertainment; Possible distraction; Lack of automatic effect; Spill-over effect of celebrity scandal/failure; Huge cost, Suspicion of monetary inducements, Distrust and Backfiring. These observed challenges are discussed more closely below:

**a) *Perception of the Advertisements as Mere Entertainment*** – It has been argued that political advertisements are often perceived as being more entertaining than informative (Osazee-Odia & Ijeh 2012, Liu & Jeffres, 2012). In the light of the above, the engagement of celebrities, who are mostly from the entertainment industry, to endorse candidates in electioneering political advertisements in Nigeria could end up injecting so much entertainment into the message and in the process derail the original objective. According to Brubaker (2011), the involvement of celebrities from the entertainment industry in electioneering campaigns in general entertains the public but at the same time tends to trivialize political issues as subjects of amusements instead of addressing them as serious policy issues that can enrich campaign manifestoes. It is also believed that many celebrities do not know much about politics and the plight of the masses (Political Studies Association, 2015). As a result of this, many Nigerians tend to perceive celebrity endorsements in electioneering political advertisements as mere entertainment and may not take their endorsements seriously.

**b) *Possible Distraction*** – The use of celebrity endorsements in electioneering political advertising in Nigeria faces the challenge of possible distraction. This distraction can occur from two directions: The advertisers and the target audience. On the part of the advertisers, there is the danger that the candidate(s)/political party(s) could be carried away by the perceived popularity of celebrity-endorsers and the excitement surrounding their endorsements and pay less attention to critical electioneering campaign themes and manifestoes that actually win votes. This is the crux of the submission of Veer et al (2010) that one of the problems of relying on celebrity endorsements in electioneering campaigns is that the political process could become distracted as it is lured to focus more on the glamour of celebrity endorsements and less on critical issues relevant to the campaign. From another perspective, Nyarko et al (2015) point out that target audiences of advertisements containing celebrity endorsements could end up paying more attention to the celebrity endorser than the actual commodity being endorsed. In the field of celebrity endorsements in electioneering political advertising in Nigeria, voters could pay so much attention to the endorsing celebrities and miss out even the name(s) of the endorsed candidate(s) and/or political party(s) completely.

**c) *Lack of Automatic Effect*** – Gone are the days when mass media contents were credited with automatic effects as encapsulated in the *All Powerful* media theory era. In the same vein, advertising, in all its ramifications, does not have automatic effects on target audiences (Osazee-Odia & Ijeh 2012). As Grusell and Nord (2010) observe, the circumstances prevailing in the environment of the target audience when the advertisement is received play crucial roles in how the message is perceived, interpreted and acted upon. Similarly, Liu and Jeffres (2010) argue that attitude of members of the target audience of electioneering political advertising towards the advertisements significantly affect their attitudes towards the advertised candidate(s). The import of the foregoing is that the contexts in which voters encounter electioneering political advertisements featuring celebrity endorsements of candidates affect how they perceive the message; how they perceive the message shapes their attitude towards the celebrity and his/her endorsement and this translates to their attitude towards the endorsed candidate. The effect is therefore not automatic

**d) Spill-Over Effect of Celebrity Scandal/Failure** – The popularity of celebrities can sometimes be a problem to them and all who do business with them. As public figures, substantial parts of their private lives are always in public glare and because bad news sell and spread faster than good news, issues of scandals are more pronounced around them than around non-celebrities. Scandals are disgraceful and often provoke negative sentiments towards the scandalized. These negative sentiments would definitely translate into negative attitudes. Candidates for election therefore actually take risks by associating with celebrities who endorse them for elections as no one can tell when the bubble of celebrity scandal would burst. This is why Nyarko et al (2015) draw attention to the fact that the public image of the celebrity at the point of endorsement is extremely important. Suffice it to add here that the reputation of the endorsing celebrity is important to the endorsed candidate at all times because the public will most likely always link the two whenever the advertisement, celebrity-endorser and endorsed candidate come to mind. This possibility of celebrity scandal to rub off significantly on candidates endorsed by him/her portends great danger for the political career of politicians because as Till and Shimp (1998) point out, celebrity scandals have the ability to negatively impact on the performance of advertisements where affected celebrities have featured as endorsers. Closely related to scandal is failure. Celebrities from any competitive field, especially sports, are exposed to the possibility of failure at any point in time. Many fans shift loyalties very quickly in the event of failure of celebrities and this would naturally spill-over into their attitudes towards advertisements where the failed celebrities feature as endorsers. This reality often compels advertisers who had engaged such celebrities as endorsers prior to the failure to withdraw the advertisements from circulation immediately the celebrity fails thereby incurring huge loss of possible return on investment on such advertisements. A good example here is the failure of the Nigerian-born boxing champion, Anthony Joshua, to defend his titles against Andy Ruiz (Jnr) on June 1, 2019. Prior to his defeat, he was featured as endorser in advertisements in Nigeria but the advertisement campaigns were discontinued immediately he lost his boxing titles.

**e) Huge Cost** – Advertisements cost money. Advertising budgets usually cover research, design, engagement of personnel, production and placement among others. Celebrities can of their own endorse candidates for elections without cost implications to the endorsed candidates but getting them to perform in electioneering political advertisements to endorse the candidates, especially in Nigeria, usually attracts a fee. In the advertising industry, advertisers generally pay huge amounts of money to celebrity-endorsers (Osazee-Odia & Ijeh 2012, Nyarko et al, 2015) and this usually significantly increase electioneering campaign cost where political advertisements feature celebrity-endorsers. This reality prompted Veer et al (2010) to point out that political marketers now strive to fully understand the effects that celebrity endorsements of candidates have on voters because of their financial implications.

**f) Suspicion of Monetary Inducements of Endorsing Celebrities** – One of the great challenges of engaging celebrities to endorse candidates in electioneering political advertisements in Nigeria is the belief among the electorate that the celebrities have been handsomely paid for their endorsements. Many members of the public in African countries (including Nigeria) believe that many celebrities are not politicians and do not have political party loyalties. Their endorsements of candidates for elections in whatever form is perceived as haven been negotiated in monetary terms and therefore lacking credibility (Political Studies Association, 2015). It can also be assumed that many celebrities do not understand the plight of the masses since they usually live in affluence. As a result, whatever they have to say about electing one candidate in an election over another in order to improve the living

conditions of the people are believed to be cosmetic and not from the heart. Even when the celebrity-endorsers make very valid points in the electioneering political advertisements, they are usually perceived as acting out the scripts of politicians for fees.

**g) Distrust** – Another major challenge of celebrity endorsements of candidates in electioneering political advertising in Nigeria is the issue of distrust of politicians by non-partisan prospective voters in the country. According to Mboho (2005), many members of the civil society in Nigeria do not have confidence in politicians and so hardly believe in mass media messages promoting them. In the same vein, Ijeh and Oji (2020) note that many voters in Nigeria distrust candidates for elections and that this distrust could easily be heightened by electioneering political advertisements featuring celebrity endorsers.

**h) Backfiring** – All the challenges discussed so far seemed to have focused more on challenges faced by the candidates being endorsed by celebrities in electioneering political advertising than those faced by the endorsing celebrities themselves. That is not to say that the endorsing celebrities always go scot free. For example, a study by Political Studies Association (2015) reveals that celebrities also suffer for endorsing candidates for elections. Some respondents in the study indicated that they would actually stop being fans of celebrities who endorse candidates that they disdain for elections. Some even went as far as reporting that they would stop patronizing anything associated with such celebrities including other products, services and ideas that they endorse in other forms of advertisements. This was corroborated by celebrities involved in the study, who indicated that they had suffered losses economically and in their fan-base as a result of their endorsements of certain candidates for elections. This situation applies wholesale in Nigeria. Many voters extend their dislike for some politicians contesting elections to celebrities who endorse them in whatever form (including in electioneering political advertising).

## 5) CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The involvement of celebrities in the endorsement of candidates/parties in electioneering political advertisements in Nigeria has been on the increase since the advent of the present democratic dispensation in 1999. Popular Nigerian actors/actresses, musicians, comedians and veteran politicians are being increasingly engaged as political communication tools to overtly or covertly endorse different candidates for elections in the hope that their popularity and influence would convince voters to accept their endorsed candidates/parties.

Nigerian celebrities have featured in theme songs, video clips, appearance in campaign rallies and concerts to endorse candidates/parties for general elections. These endorsements were subsequently extensively advertised on different advertising media by endorsed candidates/parties in order to gain voters' attention, inject excitement into the campaign, aid message recall and give the political advertisements strong appeals especially among fans of endorsing celebrities. However, the perception of these advertisements featuring celebrity-endorsers as mere entertainment, distraction from core campaign issues, lack of automatic effect of the advertisements, possibilities of spill-over effects of celebrity scandal/failure, huge costs, suspicion of monetary inducements of celebrities, distrust for politicians and possibility that endorsing politicians/parties in electioneering political advertisements can backfire negatively for endorsing celebrities posed challenges.

In order to enhance celebrity endorsements in political advertising in Nigeria, the paper makes the following recommendations:

- Nigerian politicians and celebrities should engage in celebrity endorsements in other forms of political advertisements: not only during electioneering campaigns.
- Nigerian politicians should develop strong and laudable campaign objectives that would not be derailed by the excitement of celebrity-endorsers' involvement in their campaigns.
- Nigerian celebrities should shun endorsing politicians solely for monetary rewards so that the public will have confidence in their endorsements.
- Nigerian politicians should win the confidence of the public so that celebrities would not suffer for endorsing them in political advertisements.

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