

Credocast

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CAMPAIGNING TO WIN

Engaging the Voters



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Who is the Audience?

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Who is the audience?



Conduct comprehensive stakeholder analysis to group target audiences and develop tailored communications for each group. For example, Nigeria's youth bulge demonstrates that 60% of its population are under the age of 25.³ By sheer numbers, this becomes a critical demographic that requires targeted engagement and messaging by presidential hopefuls. With strategic and tactical messaging, this can be the critical mass needed to win an election. Identifying the audience through extensive research is often difficult, so a few guidelines to properly map out the target audience are: level of influence, knowledge, attitude, values, size, demographics, voluntariness and preferred communications channels.⁴ Once the target audiences have been grouped accordingly, it is imperative to build a profile of each audience group alongside a corresponding engagement strategy.⁵

Data, data and more data



Research is about fact-finding and obtaining data to develop a winning strategy.⁶ In planning election campaigns, Credo recommends conducting opinion polls and surveys to gauge the behaviour, preferences and opinions of the public. For example, do most Nigerians want resource control? Where do most Nigerians get their news? What qualities are Nigerians looking for in a presidential candidate? What are the top three challenges that Nigerians want addressed? Opinion polls map out the issues important to voters as well help develop a profile of key stakeholder groups that will help in determining how, what and when to engage with them. The information derived will be vital to frame campaign communications around core issues.

On or off message?



Slogans accompanied with a great message that captures the core aspirations of the people cannot be exaggerated. It must connect and resonate enough to inspire and motivate toward the ballot. From the very beginning of the election process, virtually all candidates select a slogan and an idea they believe will reinforce their political campaigning. Some slogans are powerful and very effective in galvanizing support while others miss the mark entirely. Here are some contemporary campaign slogans that have resonated with voters, and some that didn't quite capture the same reaction:

HITS: In 2008, Barack Obama contested for President of the United States of America with the slogan “Change We Need” alongside the mantra “Yes We Can.”⁷ In 2015, President Buhari's presidential election slogan “Change” spoke to public frustration and perceptions of the current administration's failings after 16 years of party incumbency.⁸ These slogans were perceived as a call to action to the public. Specifically, Obama's “Yes We Can” spoke to numerous aspirations being possible and from the perspective of the collective.

³ <https://www.demworks.org/youth-bulge-making-waves-nigerian-politics>

⁴ Available from: <https://www.comm.pitt.edu/oral-comm-lab/audience-analysis>

⁵ Michelle. H (2018) Encyclopaedia Britannica. Joseph Napolitan American Political Consultant. Available from: <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Joseph-Napolitan>

⁶ Trustify (2017) 5 Times Opposition Research Changed and Election. Available From: <https://www.trustify.info/for-business/insight/opposition-research-changed-an-election>

⁷ Wikipedia (2008) Available from: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Barack_Obama_presidential_campaign,_2008

⁸ Muhammed, M (2015) Reasons Why APC Won The 2015 Presidential Elections. Available from: <https://www.abusidiqu.com/reasons-why-apc-won-the-2015-presidential-elections-by-muhammad-malumfashi/>



“ If voters feel that corruption is the major cause of economic instability in Nigeria, the messaging must reflect how the candidate will fight corruption if elected. ”

MISSES: In 2017, Hillary Clinton launched her presidential campaign with the slogan “It’s Your Time”.⁹ While the slogan is concise, it did not convey a message that would inspire and connect with all voters given the perception of Clinton being a “controversial” female presidential aspirant. Many saw this slogan as catering only to female voters (and the contestant herself) excluding minorities and men. Many felt there was too much ambiguity for misinterpretation. Another campaign slogan that fall flat for many despite its candidate winning the election was President Jonathan’s “A Breath of Fresh Air” slogan in the 2011 Nigerian presidential elections. The slogan seemed whimsical to many and didn’t seem to address the core issues of security, corruption, etc. Credo advises that when choosing campaign slogans, select phrases that capture public sentiment (that has been validated by research) and differs from the myriad slogans politicians use. Additionally, an important factor to consider is a call-to-action that can either solve a problem, evoke an emotion, or fulfill a need.

Testing the waters



When the theme and core messages have been selected, focus groups should be conducted to test and validate the selection of issues to be addressed during the campaign.¹⁰ Focus groups are critical in identifying important issues that voters see as the best illustration for the need for change or continuity. It is key the groups are diverse and provide a broad representation of Nigeria along varying demographics.

If voters feel that corruption is the major cause of economic instability in Nigeria, the messaging must reflect how the candidate will fight corruption if elected. It is important to determine voter perception and understanding of proposed slogans and align them to perception of what a candidate will do. Feedback from these crucial focus groups and message testing help validate or re-align campaign messaging and strategy. Testing should be conducted throughout the campaign to gauge messaging impact and efficacy as well as determine campaign performance through regular polling.

Putting your best foot forward

Campaign forums



▼ Campaign forums can be used to engage voters in the campaign process converting regular people into engaged and empowered volunteers, donors and advocates for political marketing. These forums involve face-to-face interactions with key influencers of various stakeholder groups, particularly youth and women who make up a significantly large percent of the populace. They should be moderated to position the candidate at the forefront of issues confronting the country. The proceedings from the forum should be promoted, publicized and/or aired live on selected media platforms.

Social Media



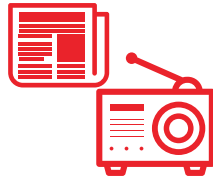
▼ Social media has increasingly become focal in modern political campaigns. It has re-shaped election media coverage and influenced voter engagement. Build anticipation for your campaign using a photo series and strategic messaging that counts down the days until your public campaign launch and campaign activities thereafter. Leveraging various digital platforms such as e-mail, websites, WhatsApp, Twitter, and Facebook for various campaign activities enable faster communications with stakeholders. Through various communications products like podcasts, endorsement videos, etc. candidates can deliver messages to a large audience. Staying on the audience social and digital media feeds will facilitate getting voter mindshare.

⁹ Mark. B (2015) Communities Digital News - Political Slogans: How they influence elections. Available from: <https://www.commdiginews.com/entertainment/political-slogans-how-they-influence-elections-48776/>

¹⁰ Ronald, A. F (2003) Winning Elections – Political Campaign Management, Strategy and Tactics

“ Voters need information to make educated decisions, and it is the candidate’s job to give it to them. ”

Campaign Advertising



▼ Campaigns must utilize both above-the-line (ATL) and below-the-line (BTL) advertising channels for maximum exposure. For ATL advertising, campaign adverts should be disseminated on television, radio and news media. This is particular important in Nigeria where most of the electorate obtain their information from the radio. BTL advertising is just as important for targeted communications to a specific demographic. Products like billboards, posters and flyers are efficient ways to similarly reach millions of voters.¹¹ Campaign budgets must support funding for massive billboards in high traffic areas, posters and flyers with eye-catching and engaging pictorials. Credo advises the use of a good composition of photography, videography, infographics, simple text and sound bites that align with the campaign goals and tailored to specific audience based one demographics (level of education, literacy, etc.).

Active Communications



▼ Voters need information to make educated decisions, and it is the candidate’s job to give it to them.¹² The candidate must communicate their credentials, achievements and competence to citizens in simple, yet aesthetically appealing information products aligned to the interests of the constituent. Newsletters, bulk SMS, social media posts and routine mailings are communication channels that facilitate frequent contact with the citizens. Active communications should also be reinforced through television and radio interviews, grassroots engagements, public debates, Twitter Q & A’s, Facebook live, etc. to demonstrate readiness to rule and keep people regularly informed. Other critical avenues to explore is engaging third party advocates that are key influencers to support campaign efforts and journalists to write articles that raise discussions on issues, answer pertinent questions particularly those relating to the candidate’s manifesto, policies and leadership proposition.



¹¹ CallHub (2016) Available from: <https://callhub.io/10-ways-internet-changed-political-campaigning/>

¹² Maxwell. X.D (1996) Voters, Candidates, and Campaigns in the New Information Age. Available from: <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/0c46/f6bafba0982890060c1649cd3f1a28d99f6.pdf>

Napolitan's golden rules

“ Understand why you are running and why people should vote for you instead of your opponent. What is your differentiating factor? ”

Joseph Napolitan is one of the founders of the political consulting industry and a long-time practitioner of the art of campaigning. According to Napolitan, who is fondly known as the father of political campaigning, there are five key lessons from his experience consulting on over 100 political campaigns globally.¹³



Start Early

Ample time is required to conduct research and develop a winning campaign communications plan.

Understand your Mandate

Understand why you are running and why people should vote for you instead of your opponent. What is your differentiating factor?



Less is More

The campaign theme and message design should be as clear and uncomplicated as possible.



Engage the Audience

Ensure that public is more in tune with your views and propositions than those of the opponent.



Take Good Photographs

A picture is worth more than a thousand words. Invest in good photography and videography.

May the best candidate Win

Campaigns and elections are the stimulus of politics without which democracy cannot exist. Therefore, for a democracy to thrive it is a pre-requisite that elected officials and citizens communicate effectively throughout the election process. Interaction between citizens and political candidates vary in important ways: the speed with which information is provided, the form the information takes, the range of information provided, the cost of producing and consuming the information, the scope of the audience, the views of citizens, interest groups, public officials and the media, etc.

Time and time again, democratic election processes all over the world have demonstrated one irrefutable fact, people in a democracy will vote according to their selfish interests. The candidate's ability to align their campaign messaging to those interests is what determines who wins the election. That alignment to the views and sentiments of the electorate can only be achieved through strategic and tactical campaign communications. In the case of Nigeria, the 2019 upcoming elections will provide an interesting assessment on how candidates will mitigate the challenging issues Nigerians want addressed especially in the current political, economic and societal climate. Some candidates have already launched aggressive public relations campaigns and others remain disturbing quiet. Counting down to 2019!

¹³ Michelle. H (2018) Encyclopaedia Britannica. Joseph Napolitan American Political Consultant. Available from: <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Joseph-Napolitan>