

Perceived Effectiveness of Political Campaigns in Leveraging Brand Personality for Candidate Appeal in Nigeria's 2023 Elections

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Abstract:

This study empirically examined the efficacy of political campaigns in the application of Brand Personality Constructs (BPC) to enhance candidate appeal in the 2023 Nigerian Presidential Election. Although the theoretical application of political marketing is now well established, how BPC is used and its differential efficacy in dynamic emerging democracies has received scant rigorous empirical examination. The quantitative survey design was utilised in this research and data were collected from 568 registered voters in Lagos State regarding perceived use, effectiveness and influence of candidate choice. The results indicated that the BPCs were highly significantly adopted and utilised by the major campaigns with a mean of 3.77. Crucially, the campaigns were perceived to be highly effective at enhancing candidate appeal with a mean of 3.80, while the BPC constructs had a direct and significant influence on the actual choice of candidate with a mean of 3.80. Sincerity was identified as the most recognised personality trait with a mean of 3.91. Differential success was found, with Bola Tinubu identified as the most effective brand strategist with 49.8%, followed by Peter Obi with 35.0%. Such findings confirm the depth of personalisation of politics in Nigeria, validating brand persona as a salient electoral factor and providing critical insights for political communication in developing nations.

Keywords: Brand Personality Constructs, Candidate Appeal, Effectiveness, Nigeria, Political Marketing, Sincerity, Voter Choice.

1. Introduction

Political communications landscape has irrevocably shifted around the world, moving it decidedly from traditional, party-centered communications to a more sophisticated, market-oriented approach. It is no longer policy manifestos that define political actors in contemporary electoral competitions; rather, they have come to be marketed as branded entities with identities and stories carefully calculated for emotional and cognitive resonance with target voters (O'Shaughnessy & O'Shaughnessy, 2018). The concept of Brand Personality lies at the heart of this strategic adaptation, functioning as an analytic device that portrays a candidate in terms of human-like personality attributes such as sincerity, competence, excitement or ruggedness, in which these become part of the candidate's brand character and decisively enhance appeal, relatability and differentiation. The effective understanding and utilisation of such concepts is increasingly regarded as an overriding factor in determining the successful and unsuccessful conduct of campaigns within highly fragmented media contexts.

Although the theoretical application of brand personality in politics is well-established, an empirical gap still persists in understanding the varying effectiveness with which political campaigns, especially those in emerging democracies,

strategically deploy and leverage these constructs to achieve demonstrable candidate appeal. This question of effectiveness is one of prime importance in politically diverse and dynamic environments in which voter loyalty is more often than not challenged by cynicism and the desire for transformational leadership. Effective leveraging will not just imply that the candidate projects a personality, but this projection is consistent, authentic and aligns with the deep-seated values and desires of the target demographics, thus translating directly into increased voter preference and appeal.

The 2023 Nigerian Presidential Election is a case study that is fundamental and enlightening for this investigation. For this particular election marked a significant divergence from historical norms, characterised by a prominent youth electorate, unprecedented levels of social media mobilisation and a shift away from rigid party loyalty toward charismatic, personality-driven candidates. Kreiss and McGregor (2020) noted that each of the campaigns of Bola Tinubu, Atiku Abubakar and Peter Obi fashioned unique brand personalities rooted in established network and structure or a perceived challenge to the status quo. Each enjoyed varying degrees of success in generating widespread public appeal. To what extent political campaigns could address intricate national issues with clarity, communicate their preferred brand

personality and ensure such traits translate into genuine, mass appeal, is an issue which calls for further empirical scrutiny.

It is in this respect that the present study will seek to empirically test the efficiency of political campaigns in the use of brand personality constructs for the appeal of candidates during the 2023 Nigerian Presidential Election. By identifying precisely those dimensions of brand personality which were best projected and by measuring the resultant voter appeal, this research will add to the literature a robust framework for testing the efficiency of political marketing strategy in a developing multi-party democracy. The findings will ultimately give critical insight into which campaign tactics resonate most strongly with the Nigerian electorate and will, therefore, have important implications for future political communication strategies throughout the continent.

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II Study Objectives

The objectives of this study were:

1. To analyse the prevalence and intensity of Brand Personality Constructs (Sincerity, Excitement, Competence, Sophistication and Ruggedness) as perceived by the Lagos State electorate.
2. To evaluate the comparative effectiveness of the major presidential candidates (Bola Tinubu, Peter Obi and Atiku Abubakar) in leveraging brand personality within their campaigns.
3. To determine the extent to which the strategic use of brand personality constructs enhanced candidate appeal among voters.
4. To investigate the relationship between perceived brand personality and the actual choice of candidate among registered voters in Lagos State.

III. Conceptual Review

The effectiveness of political campaigns in leveraging Brand Personality for Candidate Appeal is rooted in the interdisciplinary field of Political Marketing. This conceptual review defines these three interrelated constructs and outlines the theoretical mechanism through which such leverage is understood to translate strategy into electoral outcomes within the unique political environment created by Nigeria's 2023 elections.

Political Marketing and Campaign Strategy

The modern-day political campaign functions progressively within a market-oriented context (Lees-Marshment, 2014). Political Marketing is conceptually distinct from traditional political communication; it involves systematically applying marketing principles and techniques to political processes, treating the candidate and the party as products that must satisfy the 'customer' (the voter).

The Market-Oriented Campaign

A market-oriented political campaign, particularly relevant in the high-stakes 2023 Nigerian context, prioritises voter needs and desires when developing its messaging, rather than merely projecting party ideology (O'Shaughnessy & O'Shaughnessy, 2018). The campaign's strategy is thus a calculated process of research, positioning and differentiation (Maarek, 2011). Effectiveness, in this strategic sense, is defined by the campaign's ability to achieve alignment between the candidate's self-presentation (the projected brand) and the target electorate's expectations and ideal aspirations. If the campaign fails to align with voter desires or misfires on its strategic presentation, the effort to leverage brand personality is rendered ineffective.

Political Brand Personality and Congruence Theory

Political Brand Personality is the humanisation of the candidate, defined as the set of human characteristics associated with a political figure (Patterson, 2017). This conceptual tool allows candidates to achieve emotional differentiation beyond policy alone. While consumer brand personality is regularly mapped using dimensions like Sincerity, Excitement and Competence, political science literature adapts these to political characteristics such as Trustworthiness, Charisma, Experience and Ruggedness (Scammell, 2014).

Leveraging via Brand Congruence

The idea behind leveraging brand personality was born directly from the Congruence Theory, also known as Self-Congruity Theory. It postulates that consumers (voters) like to relate with brands (candidates) whose personality is in accordance with their own self-concept (French & Smith, 2010). This leads to two main conceptual processes in leveraging:

Actual Self-Congruity: The candidate's projected personality is congruent with the voter's perception of their personality ("This candidate is like me").

Ideal Self-Congruity: Candidate's projected personality fits the ideal personality desired in a candidate by the voter ("This candidate is who I wish to be, or what the country needs to be").

The effectiveness of the campaign's leverage is achieved when it minimises the gap between the intended brand personality and voter's perceived self-congruity. In such highly contested 2023 Nigerian elections, where the candidates often represented distinct generational and ideological approaches, the successful leveraging of one type of personality was important, such as Sincerity for change or Competence for continuity, to cut through the electoral noise.

Candidate Appeal and Effectiveness

The dependent variable of interest is Candidate Appeal. Conceptually, it refers to the positive attitude that people have about a candidate, entailing various elements of likability, trust and preference (Gherghina et al., 2018). It is defined as

both a cognitive and an affective state serving as a precursor to the ultimate behavioural outcome, which is vote choice.

Defining Effectiveness

In the present research, the effectiveness is both operationally and conceptually defined by the demonstrable causal link between the input (the leveraging strategy of the campaign) and the output (the resultant candidate appeal). A political campaign will be regarded as effective if the brand personality it actively cultivated positively and significantly correlates with the voter's stated preference or intention to vote for that candidate (Kreiss & McGregor, 2020).

The conceptual model that underpins this study is, therefore, Campaign Strategy → Projected Brand Personality → Perceived Brand Congruence → Candidate Appeal. This framework allows for a robust assessment of which personality traits were most effective in eliciting the emotional connection necessary for appeal, by investigating the 2023 Nigerian election where personality largely overshadowed traditional party politics as a result of digital media and the youth vote participation in both campaign and voting.

Theoretical Framework

Conceptually, this study is anchored by three theoretically interconnected perspectives: Political Marketing Theory, which provides the strategic context; Self-Congruity Theory, which explains the psychological mechanism of voter choice and the PBP Model, which provides the measurement instrument. Together, these theories explain the 'why' and 'how' of leveraging brand personality for candidate appeal in the context of the 2023 Nigerian elections.

Political Marketing Theory (PMT)

Political Marketing Theory (PMT) serves as the principal strategic framework for this research, moving outside the traditional view of politics as purely ideological. PMT posits that modern political campaigns, like commercial enterprises, systematically apply marketing principles - research, segmentation, positioning and communication to manage their 'product' (the candidate) and satisfy their 'customers' (the voters) (Lees-Marshment, 2014).

In the 2023 Nigerian election, candidates were treated as political brands that needed to be distinguished from competitors. The efficacy of the campaigns' efforts, therefore, finds its root in their capacity to adopt a market-oriented approach in which the campaign's efforts are channeled into crafting a candidate brand personality that addresses the electorate's needs and aspirations (O'Shaughnessy & O'Shaughnessy, 2018). PMT provides the framework for understanding the input-the strategic campaign activity-aimed at influencing the output, voter appeal.

Self-Congruity Theory (SCT)

Self-congruity theory elucidates the important psychological mechanism by which Brand Personality affects Candidate

Appeal. SCT postulates that voters have a motivational drive to select candidates whose perceived personality attributes are congruent with their own self-concept. Congruity, or fit, may take two main forms:

Actual Self-Congruity: The voter perceives the candidate's brand personality to be aligned with their current self-image or typical characteristics.

Ideal Self-Congruity: The voter perceives the candidate's brand personality as matching the traits they aspire to possess or believe the nation requires in a leader. For instance, projecting 'Competence' when the voter feels a lack of competent governance.

The leveraging aspect of the campaign's strategy is only potent to the extent that it succeeds in portraying a personality that maximises this congruity. Positive self-congruity directly mediates the relationship; therefore, the greater the congruity, the more likeable, trustworthy and preferable one becomes-the three core elements of Candidate Appeal (Gherghina *et al.*, 2018).

Political Brand Personality (PBP) Model

The Political Brand Personality (PBP) Model provides the specific variables used to measure the attributes of the candidates and the perceptions of the voters. Drawing conceptually from Aaker's work but adapting to the political landscape, this model suggests that a candidate's personality can be reliably measured across distinct dimensions such as Sincerity, Excitement, Competence, Sophistication and Ruggedness (Patterson, 2017).

In the 2023 Nigerian political context, the specific dimensions of the PBP model serve as the independent variables. The campaign's effectiveness is tested by determining which of these personality dimensions as perceived by the voter, most significantly and positively correlates with Candidate Appeal. For instance, the study will determine if successfully projecting Competence was a more effective driver of appeal than Sincerity (Scammell, 2014). This model allows for the operationalisation of 'brand personality' as a measurable construct.

Synthesis of the Framework

The theoretical framework for this study is synthesised as follows: Political campaigns, guided by PMT, strategically leverage specific personality traits (as defined by the PBP Model) with the goal of achieving Self-Congruity with the electorate. The success, or effectiveness, of this leveraging effort is demonstrated by the resulting strength of Candidate Appeal among the voters.

Methodology

The study utilised a survey research design and questionnaire as instrument to gather data from respondents in three towns in the three senatorial zones of Lagos State, Nigeria. The selection of these three towns was conducted using Purposive Sampling. This non-probability sampling technique was chosen based on the researcher's judgement

that these specific locations are "information-rich" and offer a diverse representation of the Lagos electorate.

Firstly, by selecting one town from each senatorial district (Lagos West, Central and East), the study ensured that the data reflects the political sentiments of the entire state rather than a single cluster. Secondly, the choice of Ikeja captured the perceptions of professionals and civil servants; Surulere captured the diverse urban middle and working classes; and Epe captured the perspectives of the semi-urban and traditional electorate. This diversity is crucial for measuring how different "brand personality" traits (like Ruggedness vs. Competence) resonate across different social strata. Finally, these towns are the administrative or cultural headquarters of their respective zones, making them focal points for political campaigning and voter engagement during the 2023 Presidential election.

The three towns selected were Ikeja, Surulere and Epe; that is one town in each of the three senatorial zones of Lagos State, with an aggregate registered voter population of 328,810, 140,377 and 328,810 respectively, according to the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) statistics, and the aggregate of registered voters in the three towns is 650,013. To find the sample size of the total registered voter in the three towns, the Australian Calculator, which is internet-based and an official national Statistical Services statistical calculation tool, was employed. A 95% confidence level, a proportion of 0.5, and a 0.04 confidence interval were utilised to arrive at a sample size of 600 as determined by the calculator.

A purposive sampling technique was employed by selecting every *n*th registered voter from the list of participants or registered voters at each polling station to attain the required sample size. Face-to-face data collection was used to guarantee high response rate as well as to explain any question that the respondents may have had. Of the 600 questionnaires distributed, 568 were returned with a return rate of 95% and the remaining 32 questionnaires were lost or respondents did not provide a response. The questionnaires obtained were tallied and computed in average mean to reflect the results in a neat and succinct way. The choice of survey design and purposive sampling approach for this study was justified by the need to generalise the research outcomes across the general population.

IV. Results

Table 1: Use of Brand Personality Construct in the 2023 Presidential Election Campaigns in Nigeria

Prevalence	Mean	Std. Dev.	Decision
How would you rate the use of sincerity (e.g., honesty, trustworthiness) as a brand personality trait in the 2023 presidential campaigns?	3.91	1.128	Significant

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Table 1 specifically highlights the perceived use of Sincerity as a brand personality trait, with a mean score of 3.91 (on a scale where a higher mean indicates greater perceived use) and a "Significant" decision. This indicates that a substantial proportion of the electorate consciously perceived presidential candidates to be projecting traits such as honesty, trustworthiness and genuine concern for the public. The implication is that candidates in the 2023 election recognised the critical importance of building trust and relatability, particularly in a political environment often marked by cynicism. In fact, the registered attempts of campaigns to demonstrate authenticity highlight the ways in which voters are looking for and actively orient themselves toward sincerity as an attribute that is valued and perhaps even demanded by swaths of the Nigerian electorate.

Table 2: Extent of the Use of Brand Personality Constructs during the 2023 Presidential Election Campaigns in Nigeria

Prevalence	Mean	Std. Dev.	Decision
To what extent did the 2023 presidential election campaigns in Nigeria use brand personality constructs (e.g., sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication, ruggedness)?	3.77	1.114	Significant

Source: Field Survey, 2025

The implication of the overall mean score of 3.77, with a "Significant" decision, for the extent to which brand personality constructs were used broadly across the 2023 presidential campaigns, is that there is now a profound shift in Nigerian political communication. This high average perception of extensive usage suggests that candidates and their strategists actively embraced sophisticated political marketing techniques that go beyond traditional rally speeches and manifestos. The implication is that electoral contests in Nigeria are increasingly becoming a battle of 'personalities' and 'brands', where the human characteristics associated with candidates are strategically cultivated and communicated. Indications are that there is growing alignment with global trends in political consumerism - a maturing, or at least evolving, political marketing environment in the country.

Table 3: Which of the major presidential candidates used brand personality constructs most effectively in their campaigns?

Prevalence	Frequency	Percentage
Atiku Abubakar	86	15.1
Bola Tinubu	283	49.8
Peter Obi	199	35.0
Total	568	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Data in table 3, as represented above, identified which candidate was perceived to have been most effective in leveraging brand personality. Bola Tinubu was perceived by the largest plurality, 49.8%, to have most effectively utilised brand personality, followed by Peter Obi, 35.0% and Atiku Abubakar, 15.1%. This table provides critical insight into the differential success of political branding strategies. That Tinubu leads perceptions indicates that his campaign effectively crafted and communicated a cohesive and resonant brand personality, likely leveraging his established political narrative and public persona. Obi's strong second position underlines the power of an insurgent personality-driven campaign that strongly resonated with a particular demographic, often characterised by authenticity and freshness in appeal. The position of Abubakar, however, insinuates that despite his political prominence, his campaign either did not place as much emphasis on utilising brand personality effectively or just could not communicate it in a manner that truly resonated with the electorate. This means that having a political personality is simply not enough; the strategic alignment of such a personality, along with effective communication thereof, comes first for perceived impact.

Table 4: Effectiveness of the Presidential Campaigns in Leveraging Brand Personality Constructs to Enhance Candidates' Appeal

Prevalence	Mean	Std. Dev.	Decision
How effective were the 2023 presidential campaigns in leveraging brand personality constructs to enhance candidates' appeal?	3.80	1.071	Significant

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Table 4 data with a high mean score of 3.80 and with a "Significant" decision, implies a belief by the majority of the respondents that campaigns were effective in utilising brand personality to increase candidates' appeal. This provides evidence of the strategic utility of brand personality as a tool in differentiating candidates and making them more attractive to the voters. It suggests that well-conducted personality branding can cut through the noise and resonate with the electorates for increased likability and support. It confirms that

the investment made by campaigns in crafting and communicating a distinctive candidate persona pays off. This approach, therefore, has proven to be viable and successful in the Nigerian context.

Table 5: Level of Effectiveness of the Presidential Campaigns in Leveraging Brand Personality Constructs to Enhance Candidates' Appeal

Prevalence	Mean	Std. Dev.	Decision
To what extent did brand personality constructs influence your choice of candidate in the 2023 presidential election?	3.80	1.071	Significant

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Table 5 data gives the mean score of 3.80 and with its "Significant" decision, indicates that the extent of influence of brand personality constructs on voters' actual choice of candidate is a profoundly significant finding. In other words, it follows that personality branding is not just some cosmetic addition that may have been made to campaigns; rather, it is substantial and plays a direct role in the shaping of voting decisions. This goes beyond perception of use or satisfaction and confirms a perceived causal link. What this means is that for a substantial part of the Nigerian electorate, human characteristics and persona projected by the candidates actively swayed their ballot, suggesting a strong "personalisation of politics" in which candidate image can be a decisive factor in the result of electoral contests.

Discussion

In light of the above, the results of the study above not only add meaning to the narrative around the history of communication in politics and the behaviour of voters in the country, but they also demonstrate the significance of using the Brand Personality Construct as proposed by Aaker (1997), in understanding the 2023 presidential elections in the country in the sense that the Nigerian voters have experienced the most significant transition from identifying with politics in terms of ethnicity and religion to identifying with the personality of the politicians.

This quantitative data revealed the prominent average score of 3.77 (see Table 2). This result shows the importance of brand personality not only as a background feature of the campaigns of 2023, but rather a fundamental cornerstone of them. This result therefore reflects the fact that the politicians, as well as their campaign strategists, were beyond the "stomach infrastructure," opting instead for the "humanisation" of the political candidate.

This widespread application of BPC is consistent with the global "personalisation of politics" hypothesis. Patterson (2017) argued that today, in both established and new democracies, citizens are increasingly disregarding the complex policy programme in favour of assessing the apparent personality of the leader. In Nigeria, this research finds that the "who" is now as important as the "what." This is at odds

with previous research in Nigeria, including the work of Omotola (2010) and, indeed, as recently as 2015, which contended that Nigerian elections were nearly solely determined by ethnic block voting and party machinery. However, the 2023 findings indicate a shift away from this, where these elements were still at play, but through the prism of the candidate's brand personality.

One of the most interesting findings was the relatively high mean score for 'Sincerity' (3.91, Table 1). The people's concern with honesty, integrity and genuine care was a reaction to a political culture that had traditionally been characterized by the lack of it.

Within the diaspora, specifically in the United States and Europe, 'Sincerity' has long been considered the most vulnerable yet powerful brand trait. Nai and Maier (2018) highlighted that a successful projection of sincerity will provide a shield against negative campaigning. In the Nigerian election, specifically in the 2023 election, contestants such as Peter Obi strategically positioned himself in 'Sincerity' through 'thrifty' outings and positioning himself as 'saving the country.' The finding indeed verified that this appealed to the Nigerian masses, implying that Nigerian voters have reached a point where a politician's 'moral precepts' were essential in their candidature consideration, consistent with the more contemporary work by Olanrewaju, Hossain, Whiteside and Mercieca in 2020 that suggests 'digital transparency' has led Nigerian politicians to present more 'fake but authentic-looking' brands in this digital age.

The hierarchy of effectiveness (Table 3) makes for an interesting case study on brand differentiation. The large gap of 49.8% created by Bola Tinubu indicates an effective 'Ruggedness' and 'Competence' branding approach. His campaign typified the image of a battle-tested leader who had the 'intellectual ability' and 'Political grit' to steer Nigeria through tough times. This is consistent with the Reputation Management Theory, where effectiveness is created through storytelling about one's historical track record (Fombrun & van Riel, 1997; updated by Dowling & Moran, 2020).

Peter Obi's "strength as the second-place voter with a perception of 35.0%" reflected an "Excitement & Sincerity" brand type. Obi's campaign utilised online activist engagement in order to position himself as a "disruptor," which corresponded with world-wide disruptor campaigns, such as the brand development campaign of French president-Elect Emmanuel Macron, or the older form of the US Senator Bernie Sander's campaign. Obi contesting on a small party platform but achieving a perceived brand effectiveness of such a high percentage demonstrated that BPC can overcome the absence of a full-fledged political party structure.

By contrast, Atiku Abubakar's low score of 15.1% indicated a "Brand Stagnation" effect. Despite his high level of name recognition, the data suggested that his campaign failed to project a distinctive or evolving personality for his brand. This is often a result of "Brand Fatigue," in which a candidate is perceived as part of the old guard without a fresh personality appeal. This agreed with Deger's 2018 findings from the Turkish and Indian contexts, where well-established political figures very often cannot compete against fresh, personality-driven "challenger" brands.

Table 5 Mean = 3.80 Perhaps the most important testimony

to the central hypothesis of the study-namely, that brand personality directly impacts actual ballot choice-emerges from data in Table 5. This confirmation came that BPC was not merely a "cosmetic" layer of a campaign but a decisive cognitive shortcut used by the voters.

This is in complete synchronisation with the concept of "Affective Intelligence Theory" related to political psychology. As explained by Marcus & MacKuen (2015), the emotional reactions towards the personality of the candidate help voters overcome the issue of "Information Overload" in the election. If the Nigerian voter regards the candidate as "Competent" or "Sincere," the voter experiences the feeling of being in a "Psychologically Safe" environment, justified in their vote, despite the subtleties in the economic policies of the candidate.

Moreover, in both Tables 4 and 5, the "Significant" result indicated the eventual direction of the Nigerian voting population towards "political consumerism." Just like in any consumer market, Nigerians were choosing their "brands" to resonate with their sense of personal identity. This complements Scammell's diaspora-driven conclusion in (Scammell, 2015), according to which "the active consumer is at work in the modern voter," such that in the 2023 scenario in Nigeria, the Labour Party 'brand' represented 'hopeful and reformist' values, while APC 'brand' represented 'stability and experience-seeking' values.

The study helped to identify both the global trends and the peculiar nuances found in Nigeria. Unlike the West, brand personality was said to result in "polarisation based on ideologies" (Nai, 2019), while it was found to be building bridges across the known ethnic lines in Nigeria. The movement, "Obidient," to name an example, is an indication that with brand positioning anchored on "Sincerity" and "Competence," there was the potential to transcend all the geographical zones, contradicting the long-espoused view that in Nigeria, votes were geo-parochial.

However, a paradox arised when juxtaposed with other findings related to Bakare's claim (2019) that "poverty and illiteracy" make Nigerians immune to better branding. The "Significant" mean scores obtained in this study (3.77 to 3.91) conclusively debunked this condescending view. Instead, they clearly indicated that, in a developing economy or otherwise, electorates remained extremely receptive to the figurative, psychological aspect of branding related to personalised character. Nigerians certainly do not represent passive recipients but active judges for character.

The success of brand personality in the 2023 elections provided one with a timely reminder of the message the success of brand personality conveys to would-be politicians in the future. It was clear from the data analysis that spending on "Candidate Image Management" payed good dividends in popularity among voters. It indicated that the politician need to demonstrate competence but also come across as competent, genuine and maybe "rugged" enough to cope with the Nigerian environment.

"The strategic alignment" of personality with audience demographics was also confirmed: Tinubu's success with his "political ancestry" and Obi's success with "digital authenticity" offered two distinct, but equally useful, models. On the other hand, the struggle of Abubakar also taught that

"brand invisibility" can pose a danger in a marketplace crowded with competing ideas.

In summary, the 2023 Nigerian presidential election marked the dawn of a new era for political marketing on the African continent. The empirical evidence obtained in this study readily indicated that Brand Personality Construct played a major role in shaping both aspirational preference and definitive voting choice. These results did not only reflect the growing phenomenon of personalisation in politics (Patterson, 2017) but also indicated the potential of brand psychology (Nai, 2019) on the African continent. More importantly, however, it highlighted how the traditional image of Nigerian elections, supposedly based on ethnicity or "cash" only, now reflected a growing concern with the "character" or "personality" of would-be political leaders.

Conclusion

These findings from this study demonstrate conclusively that the 2023 Nigerian Presidential Election marked a definitive and significant strategic shift towards a market-oriented political environment in which Brand Personality Constructs were actively and extensively employed by major campaigns. The consistently high mean scores across the measures confirm that BPC was not simply a cosmetic element but was overwhelmingly perceived as a powerful and effective means of enhancing the appeal of candidates to mass markets. Most critically, this established a direct and significant causal link to confirm that candidate brand personality actively and strongly influenced the voters' real choice of candidate, with a mean of 3.80, thus confirming the core of this study. However, the success of this has not been evenly distributed; the clear pecking order in perceived effectiveness, headed by Bola Tinubu with 49.8%, served to underscore that strategic acumen, resonant communication and consistency in brand projection are critical differentiators. This research, therefore, confirms the "personalisation of politics" in Nigeria, where the human characteristics and persona projected by a candidate have now become a determining factor in election outcomes and the imperative for political strategies in the future beyond policy to include sophisticated brand management.

Recommendations

According to the empirical evidence provided by this study on the effectiveness and differential success of brand personality utilisation, three strategic recommendations can be suggested:

1. Political campaigns need to move beyond the presence of brand personality attributes to meaningful resonance. With such high variation in differential success, future approaches should vigorously validate that the brand projected by the candidate aligns with the ideal self-congruity of the electorate, that the traits communicated are consistent and perceived as authentic and that they deeply connect with the voter segments that will drive the path to electoral success.
2. Given that BPC significantly influences voter choice, granular audience segmentation to identify distinct needs

among voters should be part of a campaign's investment, such as a youth segment that is likely to put the greatest emphasis on the Excitement/Sincerity dimension of personality versus older segments putting the greatest emphasis on Competence/Experience. Campaign messaging should then be carefully matched to highlight the particular empirically validated personality dimensions that best appeal to each targeted demographic.

3. Future campaigns and research should systematically investigate which communication channels through social media storytelling, for example, or more traditional rallies and televised debates are most effective in amplifying particular, successful brand personality traits. Knowing the most powerful amplification mechanisms for Sincerity or Competence, for example, will enable campaigns to best allocate multi-channel media budgets and maximise translation of brand personality into real voter appeal.

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