POLITICAL REBRANDING AND ELECTORATE ACCEPTANCE OF POLITICAL PARTIES IN NIGERIA

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A B S T R A C T

This study examined the relationship between political rebranding and electorate acceptance of political parties in Nigeria. A total of four hundred (400) respondents (voters) in Rivers State were sampled upon which a descriptive design was employed and the hypothesized relationships were subjected to analyses using a simple regression statistical tool. The study found that party image, party identity, and party trustwere political rebranding techniques can trigger electorates' acceptance. Therefore, the researcher concludes that for the rebranding of Nigerian politics to be successful, it must have a party image, party identity with some elements of trust. Based on the findings, the study recommended among other things that, political parties should build credible political party image and identity, to enable them to remain attractive to the electorates.

K E Y W O R D S

Political Rebranding, Electorate Acceptance, Party Image, Party Identity, Party Trust, Political Parties

INTRODUCTION

Politics in Nigeria has witnessed tremendous changes right from the time of military regime to our present democratic dispensations (Glory& Agnes, 2016). This was nevertheless occasioned by various coup d'état by military personnel and the eventual democratic rule of law in 1999. This paradigm shift in Nigerian's political history and how to rebrand the country's political system are among the numerous drives or reasons many scholars and practitioners are interested in this area. According to Pate, Nwabueze&Idiong, (2013), due to numerous advocates by civil society groups, citizens, non-profit organizations, non-governmental institutions, and even some international bodies, to mention but a few; that Nigeria must be "rebranded" if she wishes to achieve her dreams and aspirations as a notable global brand. This however, from the marketing perspective implies the application of key marketing strategies in managing the "Nigerian brand entity". This is universally known as political marketing. Political rebranding was massively employed since there is no known cutting edge strategy that can win all the time, given the political terrain in Nigeria where competition is stiff.

According to Ahmed, Lodhi, & Ahmad, (2015), political rebranding could be described as are-added value that a country's political party thinking is perceived to have, that gives it a strong, sustainable, and differentiated advantage over other political parties. The choice of a particular political personality (product/service) does not only have a profound effect on the political life of a country, it also distributes costs and benefits to political actors i.e. political parties and candidates (Kunle, 2010). Designing a credible and inclusive political orientation (marketing orientation) is a necessary enterprise in all democracies whether transitional or consolidated.

As targets in political campaigns, the electorates are influenced through various political marketing strategies and programmes. The array of political marketing strategies provides information which electorates need to assess candidate's capability and proficiency in satisfying their needs. The contents of the campaign blue-print are the expressions of candidate's objectives for seeking acceptance through votes from the electorates (Owuamalam, 2014).

The nomination and electorate acceptance of political personality into various political offices are important in party politics and representative democracy worldwide. In every political party, such nominations and acceptance are made at national and state convention spreceding the presidential, gubernatorial, and other local elections (Achor &Moguluwa, 2012). Irrespective of the level of political campaign, the electorate (customers) is the target. They buy the political product if it meets their constituency needs; they are also the recipients of political messages through marketing communication that solicit their support or acceptance/vote. The electorates may vary in their individual expectations which could range from a desire for total change from 'politics as usual', vibrant and visionary political leadership, to detribalized leader with holistic electorate-focused programmes (Achor,Nwachukwu& Nwokocha, 2016) that will be done without biased mind but what the political product can offer to the market.

Rebranding of Nigeria political orientation is a campaign aimed at improving the image of Nigerian politics locally and internationally is not new. The recycling of our political leaders from the then military leaders who hide in a civilian umbrella and imposed themselves on the electorates to accept them need to be looked at, and this calls for political rebranding. Political rebranding and branding are two closely related marketing techniques traditionally associated with products and services. Recently, these marketing techniques (rebranding and branding) have been imported by some countries in their effort to market their cities, services, regions and political business to the rest of the globe thereby increasing their international profile, attract or improve their foreign direct investments

and earnings (Agba et al., 2009). The political rebranding strategy, which we examined in the paper, is a direct fall out of the electoral fraud that characterized the electorate acceptance of political products among other issues. If the political rebranding strategy (or any other marketing strategies) is to succeed, then there is a need for attitudinal change or orientation on the part of Nigerians especially of her leaders (Egwemi, 2010) and the citizens. According to Hankinson and Cowking (1996) "a brand is simply a product or service which can be distinguished or differentiated from its competitors". As suggested by Hart and Murphy (1998) such distinguishing aspects and brand features could be tangible and intangible. With products, the tangible and intangible values are easily identifiable by the electorates (consumers), as they can feel, touch, sample and judge the product before accepting (purchasing), this is not the case with services, which the consumers can only judge after experiencing or based on the prior knowledge and information that they have about the service, obtained through third parties such as family, friends, colleagues, the media and through sustained brand identity schemes (Hart & Murphy, 1998).

Elections they say serve as one of the means of appointing leaders in many countries today. This process ought to be bloodless and sensitive marketing warfare (Hayes & McAllister, 1996) but not the case in Nigeria where many have lost their lives out of election which need rebranding. According to the authors, sensitive marketing warfare simply connotes the manner at which politicians or candidates for an election canvass for votes, political mandates, and acceptance from the electorates. Mostly, in some third world countries (like Nigeria), politicians strategize through different means ranging from persuasion, promises, gifts among others, which amount to 'offer' from the politicians and at the same time *acceptance* from the electorates. These actions from both the political personality (candidate) and the electorates (customers) are referred to as vote buying and vote selling respectively. Vote-buying could be viewed as a form of transaction where political personalities give out goods in the form of gift or cash to canvass for electoral support and voters' turnout (Guardado &Wantchekon, 2018)and acceptance.

More so, the relationship between the political personality and the electorate cannot be underestimated. Candidate must be able to convince the target market to patronize them by appealing to voters (Michael & Robert, 2008). Therefore, voters select political products not only on charisma, competence, worthiness, trust, and other factors that are difficult to access but other issues that electorates used to determine the viability of the candidate- by projecting favourable position for their preferred candidates (Michael & Robert, 2008). It is on this note that, electorates' orientation on the part of personality acceptance needs to be positioned and repositioned.

Based on this backdrop, the study wishes to investigate the relationship between political rebranding and electorate acceptance of political parties in Nigeria.

Problem Statement

Nigeria as a brand has suffered image problems and security challenges, local and foreign investors are scared of investing because of the destruction of investments and looting of properties during general elections in the country. The recent #Endsars Protest has alerted the international community political system witnessing. The politicians in Nigeria have over the years 'become more desperate in taking and retaining power; more reckless and greed in their use and abuse of power; and more intolerant of opposition, criticism and efforts at replacing them. Politics has been simulated with political violence, constitutional abuse, ethnic thuggery, religious bigotry, social injustice, corruption,

electoral malpractice, vote buying, undue interference of National Assembly on election matters, and lack of adequate electorate education.

The political environment in Nigeria today has presented unhealthy rivalry especially among major political products (Pate et al., 2013). This is especially the power brawl between the Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP) and the All Progressive Congress (APC) recently; both at the federal level and across different states of the federation, then has not given the Nigerian nation a reputable brand at the international scene, calling for urgent rebranding to save them from mockery. Vote buying and selling are phenomena which should be addressed in order to return sanity to the Nigerian democratic and political system. Similarly, many Nigerians are quick to point accusing fingers to the country's political leaders but do not see them as part and parcel of the unworkable Nigeria political system. They do not see themselves as part of the people that brought the country into present situation. Nobody is excluding the elite and ruling class from the 'generated mess', but the masses cannot fold their hands and anticipate a change to initiate itself. The average Nigerians must also shoulder some responsibilities by shunning corruption and change of orientation.

The wake-up call for all these shenanigans is total political rebranding strategy in all sphere of Nigerian political system. Political marketing orientation will enable the country rebrand itself by enlightening her electorates on the best way to accept and select the candidate(s) that meet their expectation and also the political elites. This can be achieved through party identity, party image and party trust. It is against this backdrop that the study examines the effect of political rebranding on electorate acceptance of political parties in Nigeria.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of this study was to examine the relationship between political rebranding and electorate acceptance of political parties in Nigeria. The specific objectives are put forward:
➢ To determine the effects of party image and electorate acceptance.
➢ To determine the effects of party identity and electorate acceptance.
➢ To determine the effects of party trust and electorate acceptance.

Research Hypotheses

The following research hypotheses were formulated to guide the research study, which include:

H_{01}: There is no significant relationship between party image and electorate acceptance of political parties in Nigeria.

H_{02}: There is no significant relationship between party identity and electorate acceptance of political parties in Nigeria.

H_{03}: There is no significant relationship between party trust and electorate acceptance of political parties in Nigeria.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical foundation: The theory that underpinned this study is bilateral bargaining and clientelist theories. The theory explains how electorates' attitudes and their compliance to vote trading offered by the politicians in Nigeria has contributed to the issue of non-accountable of political principal to the populace that elected them. Arguably, this leads to a low level of economic growth and development in Nigeria. The theory as argued by Napel (2002) is portrayed by two agents. These agents include "individuals, firms, governments, who have a common interest in cooperating, but who have conflicting interests and objectives concerning the particular way of doing so". The agents

involve come together with a common goal and focus in order to produce certain surplus or benefit to themselves or the society at large without considering the effect of their involvement. Bilateral bargaining style can be described as a determination between two or more people or groups of people to co-operate for a purpose and share the result/payoffs accordingly.

Both in politics and life, every person needs interaction to enjoy the maximum dividend of one's action. This has canvassed for series of interaction, negotiation and bargaining among parties involved in everyday life (Young, 1998; Van Bragt et al., 2000). People enter into agreement with their fellow human beings in order to achieve certain purposes (social exchange theory). Arguably, this has made political parties and their candidates to lobby the masses with a series of campaign promises, gifts and device persuasive means to canvass for acceptance and votes. Therefore, *offer* and *acceptance* action by both the political principal and the masses amount to what could be described as vote trading (vote-buying and vote-selling). This attitude is common to every political setting but the rate at which many African countries practice it, canvass for the examination of vote trading in Nigeria politics is alarming and requires urgent rebranding (political rebranding).

Electorate Acceptance

Electorate acceptance is described as "marketing good qualities of a political candidate through personality profiling, image/reputation research and management, opinion audit and personality packaging, etc. in order to secure the support of party members or the electorate before, during and after elections or any political mobilization campaign (Achor, 2011; Moguluwa& Achor, 2013). One key aim of those who engage in political candidate marketing is to secure a cross sectional endorsement of the candidacy of a political aspirant/candidate, either at the party or society level. A critical observation of the Nigerian political terrain shows that securing the electorate acceptance of political candidate's candidacy across sectoral divisions is done through various political marketing communication platforms (Moguluwa& Achor, 2013) and this can be achieve through properly conceived political advertising. Political advertising is one of those key communication strategies/ platforms used in achieving the goals of candidate marketing (Ozoh, 2013). To effectively utilize political advertising in candidate marketing, the political advertiser (candidate) through its consultants or campaign team needs to engage in opinion poll and image research to discover the image and reputation profile of the candidates. The surveys will help to anchor the candidate's message based on a unique selling proposition. The unique selling proposition, according to Ozoh (2013) is an identifiable, highly competitive advantage inherent in one brand and which can be asserted over and above competition.

Electorate acceptances are determined solely by how the various political parties have been able to communicate their candidates to the public (voters). Shelves (2005) posited that electorate acceptance can be distinguished using factors as short and long-term factors. Short-term factors are things about a particular election that may lead an electorate to vote one way or another. For example, if times are bad, a number of electorates will vote against whosoever, is in the office as a way of showing their unhappiness. Long term factors on the other hand, is the commitment of various social groups to a particular political party over time. These two factors have been seen to be practiced by electorates in recent times. Contemporary electorates may likely not be moved by the aforementioned unless and only if political candidates can deliver on campaign promises by employing the marketing communication strategies efficiently and effectively.

Voters need information about the features of the product (candidate) or service, its price and how they can access it, to make informed purchase (acceptance) decision (Potluri, 2008). In support of this notion, Butter and Collins (1994) observed that "the candidate uses marketing professionals to convince the electorates to vote for him or her and to buy into his or her vision for the country in question". Newman (1999) shares related vision as he observes that "it takes a good political marketing researcher, media strategist and other stable consultants to effectively market a candidate for electorate acceptance".

Political Rebranding

Political rebranding is gathering momentum today by scholars in behavioural sciences especially in marketing discipline because of its underlying importance. We cannot talk about political rebranding without getting to know what political marketing stand for. According to Popkin (1999), political rebranding builds on the principles assertion that political parties must be strategically repositioned in the minds of the electorates if they must win elections. Political rebranding is the strategic use of consumer rebranding tactics in the building of apolitical image (Nielsen, 2016). According to Henneberg and O'Shaughnessy, (2007), political rebranding has three service tenets: first, policy as the service offering; second, politician as the tangible service offering; third, party as the brand offerings.

Political rebranding is essentially a change in the mindset or perception of a person or groups of people (electorates) about the nature, structure or character of politics (Schneider, 2004; Mensah, 2011).According to Mensah (2011), political rebranding mean a process of effecting a change in the structure and character of the electoral process as well as the orientation and mindset of the various stakeholders (political parties, politicians, electorates and some groups) in the electoral process through the adoption of internationally accepted best practices of democracy in order to enhance good governance. The major target of political rebranding efforts therefore is to restructure the modalities and character of elections, the mindset of the various stakeholders within the polity community including the arms of government, the political parties, political elites, the masses, the media, the Civil Society Organisations, the agencies of government (the military, the paramilitary, the police) the international donor agencies and the international community. The whole essence of political rebranding is therefore to change the negative perception of election management body and to increase the loyalty and patronage of the stakeholders especially the electorates towards the process so as to contribute their quota to nation building (Worlu, 2010). The Nigerian political process is perceived by many stakeholders as corrupt, violent, and manipulative of the desires of the masses to achieve selfish interests of the political principals and ruling class (Ayo, Oluranti, Duruji, &Omoregbe, 2015). The modern democratic ethos which revolves around international best practices therefore cannot accommodate ballot box stuffing or snatching, electoral violence, extra judicial killings during elections, politically motivated assassinations, brazen corruption, vote-buying and misappropriation and the like which are dominant features of Nigerian political process which call for rebranding.

The political process leading to democratic governance has been misconstrued by majority of Nigerians as an opportunity to better ones livelihood and consequently which has happened to be so; politics is seen as the gateway to paradise on earth by political elites (National Human Rights Commission, 2007; Osumah&Aghemelo, 2010;Omotola, 2010). Politics today is the cause of a great

number of deaths in Nigeria through the acts of violence, thuggery, political assassinations and crimes that are linked with the quest for power (Animashaun, 2010) without conscience of good governance. The political principals have created poverty in the country which make the masses to accept any peanuts thrown to them by these principal and it effect is alarming.

Empirical Review
Relationship between Political Rebranding and Electorate Acceptance

Some of the reasons that vote buying, ethnic thuggery, religious bigotry, election violence and etc is currently receiving a big boost in Nigeria include lack of trust in the political elites as well as the electoral umpire; high level of illiteracy and low level of voter education (consumer education). Political rebranding of Nigerian politics by all and sundry will help salvage this orientation. Many of those that voted against all odds discovered that their votes could not count due to mistakes made during elections that resulted into high percentage of voided votes in elections. Further, the unusually high number of 79 political parties on the ballot in Nigeria during the 2019 general elections was enough to confuse the electorate (Makinde, 2019; Ajayi, 2019). Apart from the huge cost of printing ballot papers the illiterate electorates found it difficult to scan through so many political parties listed on the ballot papers.

Pich et al. (2016) further reinforce the services perspective of a political rebrand, arguing that the act of governing is 'intangible, complex and heavily reliant on people to accept a candidate'. This view of a political rebrand as an amalgam of factors – and indeed, as an 'overall packaged concept' that can't easily be unbundled, Lock and Harris(1996) – also makes it clear that perceptions of a party leader are closely intertwined with perceptions of a party as a whole, and of local candidates as well as the electorates. This could have been eliminated with intensive voter education as part of political rebranding to show the electorate especially the illiterate ones how to accept a candidate (product).
Scammell (2007) considered how the utilization of brands and brand identity provides a conceptual framework to establish links between the functional and emotional attributes of political parties, enabling clarity with the repositioning and communication of policy. Smith and French (2009) also support the theory of political parties as brands, having identified the means by which a political brand forms in consumers' memories and how, in order to be successful, the political brands must achieve meaningful connection, a sense of community and authenticity, whilst maintaining core brand values that are of relevance and use to electorates (consumers).

Party Image and Electorate Acceptance

According to Keller (2002), party image refers to the overall perception towards a political party as reflected by the party's associations long believed by electorates (consumers). Also, Keller and Lehmann (2006), conceptualized party image as a multidimensional electorate-oriented constructs which is intended to capture the cognitive, affective, and conative relationships that electorates attribute to a political party and its candidate of choice. They further stated that particularly, from the political marketing perspective, one dimension of party image in the marketing literature is political personality. To them, political personality is the set of attributes associated with a party.
More so, David and Mian (2010), conceptualized the relationship between the media and political party image. They discovered that the media, to a large extent influences the perceptions towards a political party which reflect the attitude and actions towards the party and its constituents. A positive party image for instance presents a significant advantage and the possibility of achieving majority

votes through electorate acceptance. Blais (2011) observes that political behaviourists argue that electorates prioritize competence, which favours the experience of incumbents, and trustworthiness, which is an assessment of the leader's character.

According to Alsamydai (2004), one of the key roles of a political party is how to create a positive image for its party and candidates to the mind of the people (electorates). It is believed that the higher the positive image of a party, the more success and positive attitude and perception towards the party as reflected by the electorates and other stakeholders. Previous research has suggested that a party's image play an important role in influencing electorate acceptance (Lindberg & Morrison, 2008; Friday, 2008). According to Friday (2008), for instance, the mental image of both the candidate and other party executive has a positive relationship with the electorates' attitude towards the party and this influence their (voters) decision making that leads to acceptance/patronage. The author further argued that in most scenarios, voters base their acceptance on the attachment to a party's image.

Party Identity and Electorate Acceptance

The concept of political party identity has its roots from brand identity and the former is analyzed from the political marketing point of view while the latter is perceived from the brand management perspective. According to Nandan (2005), party identity refers to the inimitable set of associations and image that the political party strategists intend to create and maintain putting in the mind of the electorates (customers). These associations portray what the political party is and its associated promises to the electorates. Thus, Kostehjk and Erik (2008), maintains that the essence of every political party is to create a unique identity in the constituency – which suggest that political party should create brands that are strong, powerful, desirable and unique and should be formulated based on three qualities of a good party brand, namely, durability, consistency and realism. According to Aaker (1996) party identity focuses on party programmes, campaigns, and manifestoes, the political personality's unique traits, and the overall image of the political party.

Furthermore, political party identify draws a dissimilarity between message meaning by the political party (source) and how the message is being received by the electorates that made up the constituency (target market segment) (Foreling& Forbes, 2005). The authors further stated that party identity deals with the direction, purchase and meaning of the political party with respect to the views of party strategists and the electorates. According to de Chernatony (2007), party identity is seen as a deliberate projection and communication by the decision makers of the political party in a bid to establish a desired impression identity in the minds of electorates (customers). He further went ahead to build up a political party identity prism. The idea behind this prism is to assess the competitive demarcation between competing political parties within region.

Understanding political party from the corporate identity perspective reveals that parties with strong sense of brand identity are perceived by electorates as more indisputable and trustworthy (Harrris&de Chernatony, 2001; Nandam, 2005). DeChernatony (2007) explains the importance of party identity in taking the political party to the promise land. He stated that party identity occupies the forefront strategy in repositioning a party in the minds of electorates. Thus, party identity can be a veritable tool in influencing electorate acceptance.

Party Trust and Electorate Acceptance

According to He (2006), party trust can be defined as "the degree of cognition and feeling that the electorates hold to the political party acts in accordance with their own expectations". Generally speaking, these days' electorate lives are highly influenced by political party. Party trust proved to be

the main binding force in strengthening the relationship between the political actors and the electorates/constituencies. The fundamental objective of political marketing is to develop an intensive bond between the political party and its loyal followers, and the party trust plays the most significant role in building this bond (Hiscock, 2001). Indeed, it is the electorates, who play significant role in the development of strong political brands (Phipps et al., 2008). There is reason to believe that even the way voters choose political parties has similarities to how they make their choices/acceptances about parties (Reeves et al., 2006). Drawing on commercial marketing analogies, an election can be seen as the moment of sale: the point of choice, where voters employ the knowledge they have about a candidate or political party and make their candidate's choice (Needham, 2005).

Dissatisfied electorates may behave in different ways to show their reaction toward political parties in general and the political principal candidate, in specific, as a consequence. Also note that electorates make their choice to vote for the opponent not because of their trust; rather they do so just in the reaction to what they feels against the intended party candidate (Pauwels, 2010) or there might be a possibility that electorates do not cast their votes at all (Rydgren, 2007).

Johnson and Grayson (2005), argued that political trust is composed of two elements – cognitive and affective. The first element recognizes the various mental attribute held and the willingness thereafter by voters to rely on the party's competence to deliver on its promise. On the other hand, the affective component represents emotional disposition and the confidence held by voters towards a political party. In this regard Ahmed et al. (2015), stated that in Nigeria, electorates are beginning to lose their trust and confidence on the current APC led federal government due to economic hardship being experience by the populace. This may be true as many are of the view that the current administration have not put in place needed machineries that will enhance economic prosperity in the country.
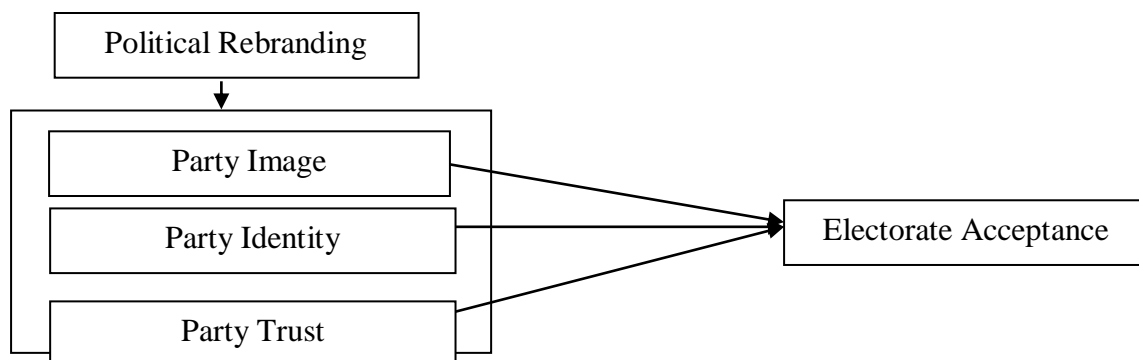

Fig. 1: Operational relationship between political rebranding and electorate acceptance

Source: *Research Desk, (2021)*

METHODOLOGY

Methodology is a vital process of carrying out empirical studies. It forms the background in which the procedures employed in carrying out a research are designed. This study employed the descriptive research design, which investigates the behaviour, opinion or other manifestations of a group of people by questioning them (Anyanwu, 2000). This was done through the use of questionnaire.

Basically, the population of this study comprise of registered voters in Nigeria of which Rivers State is our accessible population. According to the 2019 general election, registered voters in Nigeria

were 84,004,084 and Rivers State has a total of 3,215,273 registered voters (Independent National Electorate Commission, INEC, 2019). Also, there were also 91 registered political parties in Nigeria (INEC, March, 2019).

Based on the above population size, the Taro Yamen formula was used to determine the sample size. Hence the formula: n $=\frac{N}{1+N(e)^2}$ and were400 as the sample size. Simple random sampling technique was adopted by given electorates equal chance of being selected. The questionnaire was structured using a five-point likert scale from SA=Strongly Agree (5), A=Agree (4), U=Undecided (3), Disagree (2), Strongly Disagree (1) (see appendix 1). Simple regression was used to test if the independent variables are associated with the dependent variables.

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Four hundred (400) copies of questionnaire were distributed. 363(90.8%) copies were accurately filled while the remaining 37(9.2%) contained certain inconsistencies, and thus not valid for analysis. Therefore, the analysis was based on 363 copies accurately filled.

Fig. 2: Graphical Presentation of Respondents Gender Distribution
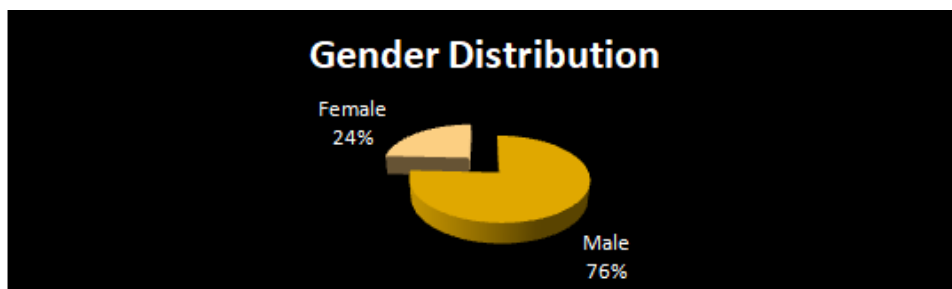
Based on the figure above, majority of the survey's respondents were males with 275(75.8%) while the remaining with 88(24.2%) were females. Since it was not about household product, majority of the decision making were made by males. Besides that, compared to female, male were more interested in politics and so on.

**Fig. 3: Graphical Presentation of Respondents Marital Status Distribution**
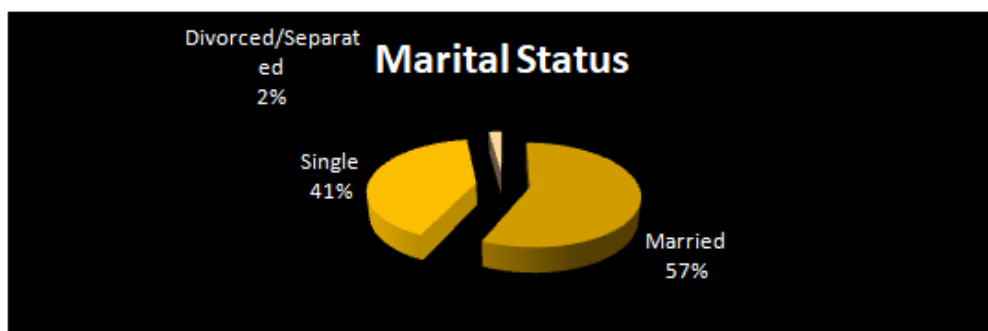
Based on the figure above, majority of the respondents were married with 206(56.7%), single respondents were 149(41%) while the remaining 8(2.3%) were divorced/separated.

Fig. 4: Graphical Presentation of Respondents Age Bracket Distribution
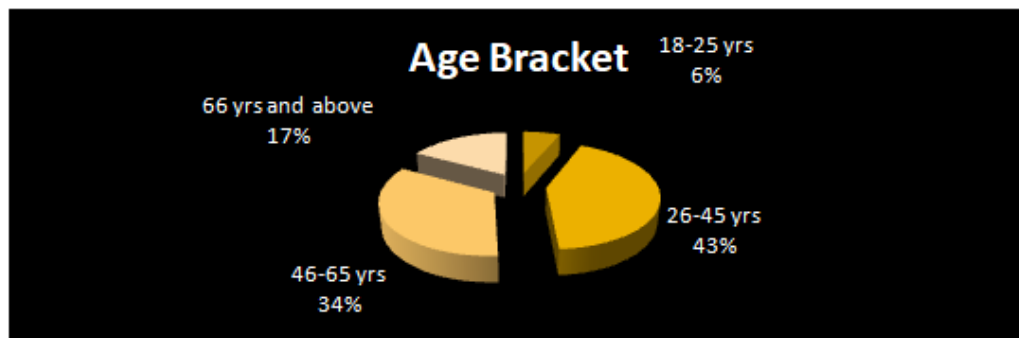
Based on the figure above, 23(6.3%) respondents fell within the age bracket of 18-25 years, 155(42.7%) respondents fell within the age group of 26-45 years, 123(33.9%) respondents fell within age bracket of 46-65 years while 62(17.1%) was recorded within 66 years and above.

Fig. 5: Graphical Presentation of Respondents occupation Distribution
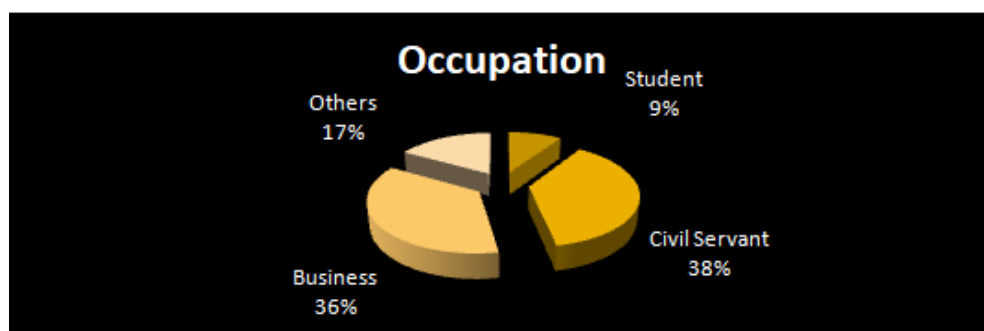
Based on the figure above, 34(9.4%) respondents were students, 137(37.7%) respondents were civil servants, and 131(36.1%) respondents were businessmen and women while 61(16.8%) respondents had other occupations not aforementioned therein.

Table 1: Properties of the Measurement Instruments.

Constructs/indicators	Standardized loading(λ)	λ²	AVE	CR
Party Image			0.80	0.92
PIM1	0.950	0.903		
PIM2	0.951	0.904		
PIM3	0.767	0.588		
Party Identity			0.87	0.95
PID1	0.906	0.821		

PID2	0.932	0.869		
PID3	0.959	0.920		
Party Trust			**0.88**	**0.96**
PT1	0.983	0.966		
PT2	0.921	0.848		
PT3	0.902	0.814		
Electorate Acceptance			**0.87**	**0.95**
EA1	0.932	0.869		
EA2	0.966	0.933		
EA3	0.901	0.812		

All loading are significant at the Pv<0.05 level.

Hair et al. (2010) recommend AVE threshold of 0.70 respectively. Based on this analysis, computed AVE and Cronbach's alphas for the four constructs demonstrate a high level of internal consistency within each variables. Cronbach's alpha for the factors of party image, party identity, party trust and electorate acceptance were 0.92, 0.95, 0.96 and 0.95 respectively. All mentioned values satisfy the threshold of 0.70, as recommended by Netemeyer et al. (2003). Thus, all 12 items remained for further analysis and no items were dropped at this stage. As all factor loadings presented in Table 4.1 were above 0.7.Thus, the relationship between all the four variables (party image, party identity, party trust and electorate acceptance) is strong.

Regression Analysis
Hypothesis One
H01: There is no significant relationship between party image and electorate acceptance of political parties in Nigeria.

Table 2: Regression Analysis showing the influence of Party Image(PIM) on Electorate Acceptance(EA).

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.917[a]	.838	.753	21.25792

a. Predictors: (Constant), Party Image

The table above revealed the significant relationship between party image and electorate acceptance of political parties in Nigeria. The results indicate that the regression relationship (R) revealed 0.917 while R square showed 0.838 in value. This implies that 83.8% of the variance in the electorate acceptance was significantly explained by the one dimension of the independent variables (party image). The result showed that a positive and strong relationship exist between the variables as indicated in the decision rule. It further means that 83.8% variation can be explained by factors within

the model used for the study while the remaining percent (16.2%) were explained by other external factors within and outside the environment.

Table 3: ANOVA

ANOVAᵃ

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	238161.204	1	21687.217	50.507	.000ᵇ
	Residual	.000	362	.000		
	Total	238161.204	363			

a. Dependent Variable: Electorate Acceptance
b. Predictors: (Constant), Party Image

As evidenced from the table 4.3, the p value is 0.000 < 0.05, which proved that there is a significant relationship between party image and electorate acceptance. The F-ratio ($F_{1, 363}$=50.507) showed significant influences in existence and this revealed the strength of the model used for the study. The t-ratio showed significance on party image to the present status of electorate acceptance of political parties in Nigeria.

Table 4: Coefficients

Coefficientsᵃ

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig. (95%)
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.9043	1.1109		1.209	.000
	Party Image	.759	.371	.644	.718	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Electorate Acceptance

Regression Model: EA = 2.9043+0.759PIM

The table above shows the findings of which party image influenced electorate acceptance. It showed that the variables have below 0.05 significant levels, (95% level of significanc).The relationship between party image and electorate acceptance was significant since the p-value is 0.000 and it was less than alpha value, 0.05. By implication, party image is significantly related with electorate acceptance. Standardized coefficient beta for party image was 0.644.

Hypothesis Two

H_{02}: There is no significant relationship between party identity and electorate acceptance of political parties in Nigeria.

Table 5: Regression Analysis showing the influence of Party Identity(PID) on Electorate Acceptance(EA).

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.902ᵃ	.814	.788	18.85709

a. Predictors: (Constant), Party Identity

The table above revealed the significant relationship between party identity and electorate acceptance of political parties in Nigeria. The results indicate that the regression relationship (R) revealed 0.902 while R square showed 0.814 in value. This implies that 81.4% of the variance in the electorate acceptance was been significantly explained by the one dimension of the independent variables (party identity). The result showed that a positive and strong relationship exist between the variables as indicated in the decision rule. It further means that 81.4% variation can be explained by factors within the model used for the study while the remaining percent (18.6%) were explained by other external factors within and outside the environment.

Table 6: ANOVA
ANOVAᵃ

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	139361.001	1	11609.444	58.826	.000.ᵇ
	Residual	.000	362	.000		
	Total	139361.001	363			

a. Dependent Variable: Electorate Acceptance

b. Predictors: (Constant), Party Identity

As evidenced from the table 4.6, the researcher found that the p value is 0.000 < 0.05, therefore it proved that there is a significant relationship between party identity and electorate acceptance. The f-ratio (F1, 363=58.826) showed significant influences in existence and this revealed the strength of the model used for the study. The t-ratio showed significance on party identity to the present status of electorate acceptance of political parties in Nigeria.

Table 7: Coefficients
Coefficientsᵃ

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig. (95%)
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	5.6703	3.7281		2.911	.000
Party Identity	.521	.301	.299	.888	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Electorate Acceptance

Regression Model: EA = 9.0019+1.021PID

The table above shows the findings of which party identity influenced electorate acceptance. It showed that the variables have below 0.05 significant levels, (95% level of significant). The relationship between party identity and electorate acceptance was significant since the p-value is 0.000 and it was less than alpha value, 0.05. By implication, party identity is significantly related with electorate acceptance. Standardized coefficient beta for party identity was 0.299.

Hypothesis Three

H03: There is no significant relationship between party trust and electorate acceptance of political parties in Nigeria.

Table 8: Regression Analysis showing the influence of Party Trust(PT) on Electorate Acceptance(EA).

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.922[a]	.850	.710	22.11111

a. Predictors: (Constant), Party Trust

The results in table 8 indicate that the regression relationship (R) revealed 0.922 while R square showed 0.850 in value. This implies that 85.0% of the variance in the electorate acceptance was been significantly explained by the one dimension of the independent variables (party trust). The result showed that a positive and strong relationship exist between the variables as indicated in the decision rule. It further means that 85.0% variation can be explained by factors within the model used for the study while the remaining percent (15.0%) were explained by other external factors within and outside the environment.

Table 9: ANOVA

ANOVA[a]

	Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	333384.111	1	75426.301	54.944	.000.[b]
	Residual	.000	362	.000		
	Total	333384.111	363			

a. Dependent Variable: Electorate Acceptance
b. Predictors: (Constant), Party Trust

As evidenced from the table 9, the researcher found that the p value is 0.000 < 0.05, therefore it proved that there is a significant relationship between party trust and electorate acceptance. The F-ratio (F1, 363=54.944) showed significant influences in existence and this revealed the strength of the model used for the study. The t-ratio showed significance on party trust to the present status of electorate acceptance of political parties in Nigeria.

Table 10: Coefficients

Coefficients[a]

	Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig. (95%)
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	3.7254	2.5472		0.777	.000
	Party Trust	0.808	.676	0.397	.564	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Electorate Acceptance

Regression Model: EA = 3.7254+0.808PT

The table above shows the findings of which party trust influenced electorate acceptance. It showed that the variables have below 0.05 significant levels, (95% level of significance). The relationship between party trust and electorate acceptance was significant since the p-value is 0.000 and it was less than alpha value, 0.05. By implication, party trust is significantly related with electorate acceptance. Standardized coefficient beta for party trust was 0.397.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This section of the paper discussed the stated results and findings of the study on the relationship between political rebranding and electorate acceptance of political parties in Nigeria.

Party image significantly and positively correlates with electorate acceptance.

The outcome from the test of analysis identified party image as having a significant impact on electorate acceptance. On this basis, the null hypothetical statement was rejected as the result revealed that there was a significant relationship between party image and electorate acceptance of political parties in Nigeria. The result showed that political rebranding which involves party image contributed towards the degree to which party image is able to engage, attract and retain its voters, drives the uniformity and uniqueness of their campaigning capacity, reputation and positioning among electorates in Nigeria and the world at large.

The finding of the study is in harmony with Friday (2008). They opined that, the mental image of both the candidate and other party executive has a positive relationship with the electorates' attitude towards the party and this influence their (voters) decision making that leads to acceptance/patronage. More so, there are evidences that political marketing on electorate candidates' choice through image generates large amounts of reposts in a short time period because party image can engage the electorates to a political actor. Furthermore, this position is supported by David and Mian (2010).

Party identity significantly and positively correlates with electorate acceptance.

The evidence on the nexus between party identity and electorate acceptance was also observed to be significant; with party identity having a significant impact on electorate acceptance. As such the null hypothesis of no significant relationship was therefore rejected. This indicates that party identity contributed significantly as a predictor of electorate acceptance.

The result of the finding aligns with the work of De Chernatony (2007), which stated that party identity occupies the forefront strategy in repositioning a party in the minds of electorates.

Party trust significantly and positively correlates with electorate acceptance.

The evidence on the relationship between party trust and electorate acceptance of political parties in Nigeria was also observed to be significant; with party trust having a significant impact on electorate acceptance. As such the null hypothesis of no significant relationship was therefore rejected. This indicates that party trust contributed significantly as a predictor of electorate acceptance. The result of the finding aligns with the work of Ahmed et al. (2015).

CONCLUSIONS

Rebranding has the potential to re-launch Nigerian political environment from the heavy yoke into the group of leading emerging political economies of the world. It will complement and give outstanding meaning to the slogan of the nation – Nigeria: Good People, Great Nation. What Nigeria needs is genuine re-branding and re-alignment in our politics that is not cosmetics but rooted in truth, pragmatism and an affirmative change. It is recommended that Nigeria is left with one alternative which is to rebuild her political image if she desires to be relevant in geo-political and economic affairs of our shrinking global village. If Nigeria fails to travel the pathway of political rebranding, revival, reawakening and rebirth she will end up becoming a sinking ship and diminishing giant of Africa politically and otherwise.

On the basis of its observations and the empirical evidence, the following conclusion was drawn:

- Rebranding of Nigerian political environment with party image will increase the possibility of an electorate to accept a candidate without being subjugated by the political elites.
- Electorates will most likely accept a candidate with favourable political identity.
- The potentiality of a political partytrust is higher when personalities with high credibility are involved.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and conclusion of the study, the following are recommended:

- Candidates should de-emphasize name calling and attack but adopt pure and comparative political marketing techniques in getting the electorates to accept them.
- Electorates should always evaluate the personality attributes of the candidate and match the results with the observable character to be able to ascertain whether the candidates fit into their choice criteria.
- Adequate electorate education should be embarked upon by INEC in order to educate the electorates on how to use technology in casting their votes.
- The Secret ballot system should be more enhanced to enable electorate exercise their voting right confidentially and at the same time prevent party agent from seeing voters' thumbprint on ballot paper.
- Political parties should build credible political party image and identity, to enable them remain attractive to the electorates.
- The Electoral Act should be reviewed periodically in order to amend and address lapses that are likely to affect the electoral process.
- Finally, the federal government of Nigeria should ensure that country's economy is in good shape in order to reduce the poverty rate and improve peoples' standard of living in the country.

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Appendix 1

Questionnaire

(Section A) Demographics	
Gender	Male
	Female
Marital status	Single
	Married
	Divorced/separated
Age bracket	18-25 years
	26-45 years
	46-65 years
	66 years and above
Occupation	Students
	Civil Servant
	Business
	Others
(Section B) Instruments	Questions
Party image	You giving good governance priority over re-branding (Bamiduro& Aremu, 2012)
	Positive behavioural change of the citizens being a first step towards re-branding Nigeria (Bamiduro& Aremu, 2012)
	Your perception about the working mechanism of a party influences your voting behaviour.(Bamiduro& Aremu, 2012)
Party identity	Your views on the benefits of political re-branding matters a lot to you(Bamiduro& Aremu, 2012)
	People-oriented party tends to deliver more on its promise. (Bamiduro& Aremu, 2012)
	Your perception about the working mechanism of a party influences your voting behaviour. (Bamiduro& Aremu, 2012)
Party trust	You prefer parties with integrity (Bamiduro& Aremu, 2012)
	You associate yourself with parties that have credible members. (Bamiduro& Aremu, 2012)
	You disposed to parties that keep to their campaign promises(Bamiduro& Aremu, 2012)
Electorate acceptance	Your exposure to a Candidate'sadvertising messages influenced you as your choice (Okpara et al., 2016)
	Candidate's manifestoes influencedyou to choose him as your candidate (Okpara et al., 2016)
	You choose a candidate because of theinfluence his campaign slogan of industrialization andconsolidation on gains of his rescue mission had on you. (Okpara et al., 2016)

Appendix 2
Factor Analysis
Party Image

Communalities

	Initial	Extraction
PIM1	1.000	.950
PIM2	1.000	.951
PIM3	1.000	.767

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Party Identity

Communalities

	Initial	Extraction
PID1	1.000	.906
PID2	1.000	.932
PID3	1.000	.959

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Party Trust

Communalities

	Initial	Extraction
PT1	1.000	.983
PT2	1.000	.921
PT3	1.000	.902

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Electorate Acceptance

Communalities

	Initial	Extraction
EA1	1.000	.932
EA2	1.000	.969
EA3	1.000	.901

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.