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**Jos Metropolitan Residents' Perception of Government-Owned Broadcast Media Coverage  
of the 2011 Gubernatorial Electioneering Campaigns in Plateau State, Nigeria**

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**Abstract**

*The paper examines Jos residents' perception of the broadcast media coverage of the 2011 gubernatorial elections in Plateau State, Nigeria. The rationale behind the study was to find out how Jos metropolitan residents perceived the way and manner the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA, Jos) and Plateau Radio Television Corporation (PRTVC, Jos) covered the elections of 2011. The study adopted a quantitative research method employing questionnaires as instruments of data collection. The findings show that the Plateau state-owned PRTVC, Jos, paid more attention to the gubernatorial electioneering campaigns than the federal government-owned Nigerian Television Authority in Jos. The data show that PRTVC covered the gubernatorial electioneering campaigns to a very great extent. Findings further show that the ruling party (PDP) received more coverage than the other political parties. Respondents were dissatisfied with the way and manner the media covered the 2011 gubernatorial elections because parties were not equally covered. The paper, therefore, concludes that even though the government-owned broadcast media in Plateau State covered the 2011 gubernatorial elections in Plateau State, more coverage was given to the People's Democratic Party (PDP). They were not fair in the coverage of political parties that contested the 2011 gubernatorial elections. Based on the findings and conclusion, the paper recommends that the media should endeavour to give equal treatment to political parties that contest any given elections. Only then can the mass media be seen as credible.*

**Keywords:** *residents, broadcast media, perception, elections, campaigns*

**I. Introduction**

Elections are the centerpiece of democracy. Through voting, people can voice their opinions, express their hopes and aspirations, discipline their leaders and ultimately control their nation's destiny. Elections are the public's source of power, but in order to use its muscle effectively, it has to know where candidates and parties stand on public policy issues. The mass media have a duty to report thoroughly and accurately what the contestants stand for. This role is perhaps the

media's major challenge. All news is important, but campaign coverage is crucial because of its capacity to empower the electorate (Coverage of political campaigns). This is because what voters know about campaigns comes to them through the various channels of communication like newspapers, magazines, radio, television, etc. In reporting on campaigns, the news media bring their usual procedures and tendencies to the campaign trail. In other words, far from simply mirroring all that politicians say and do, journalists select the information to be reported. As averred by Obot (2013):

Mass media are indispensable avenues for political parties/candidates to reach a large percentage of the electorate who would otherwise have been unreachable by political campaign messages delivered at rallies. The mass media through their coverage of electioneering campaigns and airing of political advertisements have the potential of influencing voting decisions of the electorate. (p. 173)

The foregoing implies that the media have a crucial role to play during electioneering campaigns. This may be unconnected with the fact that mass media are the most common sources for information about election campaigns in democracies and societies in transition around the world, and concerns about political bias in the mass media are at the heart of debates about the roles and responsibilities of the media at election time due to the possibility that the media will, intentionally or unintentionally, influence the electorate (Semetko, 2008).

The media play a crucial role in informing the public about politics, campaigns and elections. The broadcast media inform, educate, entertain and set the agenda for the public to follow. There is a wide-spread belief that there is a strong political bias in the media and while that may be true to some extent, it does not have a significant effect on shaping the voters' views (Lane, 2007). The media exercise its greatest influence during elections. Every aspect of a political campaign,

from fundraising and press announcements to staged events and major speeches, is planned with an eye toward garnering media coverage. Ragone (n,d) opines that political candidates need television, newspapers, radio, magazines and the Internet to reach voters with their message. Candidates who lack an effective media strategy are likely to be destined for failure (as cited in Asemah and Edegoh, 2012). As noted by Obot (2013):

The mass media have always remained a key factor in the political sphere in democracy; during elections. The mass media, especially the broadcast media; provide a link between the political party/candidate and the electorate. The mass media serve as a platform for political parties/candidates to campaign for votes. Through coverage of electioneering campaigns and airing of political advertisements, the electronic media help in influencing voters' decision either in favour or against a given political party or candidate. (p. 174)

The media are a collective means of communication by which the general public or populace is kept informed about the day to day happenings in the society. The media are also said to be an aggregation of all communication channels that use techniques of making direct personal communication between the communicator and the public (Asemah, Edegoh, & Ogwo, 2013). Nigeria's media landscape has always been to broadcast commercial jingles, slogans or what Garret (2010) referred to as bumper sticker slogans. The media capitalise on this slogan and sometimes use it for a commercial jingle and run it as often as possible as it finally becomes not only what people think but also what they should think about (McCombs & Shaw, 1972).

The foregoing, therefore, implies that free and fair elections depend to a significant degree on the ability of the news media to function in an impartial and professional manner. Adherence to the standards of accuracy, objectivity and balance in news and other information programming is essential. Departure from these standards can deprive the public of a balanced picture of the

contending parties and candidates as well as of important issues raised in the election campaign. Upholding the standards of professional journalism is difficult in the election campaign context under any conditions. Objectivity may require reporting facts that are detrimental to one contender or another. Accuracy may demand reporting a story differently from the political contestants' perception of the circumstances. Balance is difficult to achieve in any one report, but must be striven for over a range of broadcasts.

The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) registered nine (9) parties to participate in the 2011 gubernatorial elections in Plateau State. The parties are: Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN), African Democratic Party (ADC), All Nigerian People's Party (ANPP), All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA), Congress for Progressive Change (CPC), Labour Party (LP), Mega Progressive People's Party (MPPP), People's Democratic Party (PDP) and Progressive People's Alliance (PPA). These parties had their candidates in the 2011 gubernatorial elections in Plateau State, but it is questionable whether the public broadcast media in Plateau State gave equal coverage to the political parties during the elections. Therefore, the topic motivating this study is Jos metropolitan residents' perception of public broadcast media coverage of the 2011 gubernatorial elections in Plateau State, Nigeria.

## **II. Research Questions**

The following research questions have been designed to guide the study:

1. To what extent did the public broadcast media in Plateau State cover electioneering campaigns in Plateau State during the 2011 gubernatorial elections?
2. Which of the political parties received more coverage from the public broadcast media in Plateau State during the gubernatorial elections in 2011?
3. Was political advertisement of the ruling party (PDP) through the public broadcast

media responsible for its success in the 2011 gubernatorial elections in Plateau State?

4. What is the role of the agenda-setting of the public broadcast media on party/candidate's choice during the 2011 gubernatorial elections in Plateau State?

5. Are the residents of Jos metropolis satisfied with the way and manner the public broadcast media covered the 2011 gubernatorial electioneering campaigns in Plateau State?

### **III. Conceptualisation of Elections and Campaigns**

Election is an important hallmark of enthroning and sustaining democracy in every society. Umechuhwu (2004) maintains that election is paramount and highly significant in any given society. It is the time when leaders who pilot the affairs of a nation are elected. It is also the time when all the eligible voters exercise their rights as citizens to participate in the government; that is, the right to vote and to be voted for. According to Lawal (2003), "election can be described as mechanism which permits the largest possible part of a population to influence major decisions by choosing among contenders for political office" (as cited by Edegoh, Ezebuenyi, & Asemah, 2013, p. 127). Lawal (2003) further states that election performs the important functions of leadership selections. It enables the electorate to indicate and, by implication, underscore their preference of a particular leader or leaders whom they consider worthier than others for a specified public office. Okwodu, as cited by Lawal (2003), defines electoral system as the process by which the citizens of a state vote to elect people to represent their interests and opinions in government. Thus, for this purpose, the territory of the state is normally divided into various electoral constituents, the inhabitants of which vote for one of the various candidates to become their representative. Election is the celebration of the fact that in the final analysis, sovereignty resides with them and they have the last say on the conduct of affairs of the nation (as cited by Edegoh, Ezebuenyi, & Asemah, 2013).

An election is the mechanism by which a democracy fills elective offices in the legislature and, sometimes, the executive and judiciary, and in which electorates choose local government officials. Elections are held in many settings from students' unions to corporate offices. The study of elections is called psephology (Wikipedia, n.d).

A political campaign is an organised effort which seeks to influence the decision making process within a specific group. In democracies, political campaigns often refer to electoral campaigns wherein representatives are chosen or referendums are decided. In modern politics, the most high profile political campaigns are focused on candidates for head of state or head of government, often a President or Prime Minister. The message of the campaign contains the ideas that the candidate wants to share with the voters. The message often consists of several talking points about policy issues. The points summarise the main ideas of the campaign and are repeated frequently in order to create a lasting impression with the voters. In many elections, the opposition party will try to get the candidate "off message" by bringing up policy or personal questions that are not related to the talking points.

Most campaigns prefer to keep the message broad in order to attract the most voters. A message that is too narrow can alienate voters or slow the candidate down with explaining details (Wikipedia, n.d). Electioneering campaigns, as noted by Chile (2011), refer to "a systematic effort in coordinating all relevant activities over a long period of time, to obtain a specific all-encompassing objective" (p.151). Also commenting on campaigns, Brian (2009) contends that "campaigns are the purchase and use of advertising space, paid for advertisements or commercial rates in order to transmit political messages to a mass audience" (as cited in Alom, 2013, p. 155) This, therefore, implies that political campaigns are organised to sell political candidates and political parties to the electorates. This perhaps explains why Alom (2013) says that

electioneering campaign means providing the electorate more information about the manifestoes and qualities of candidates, thereby placing them in a better position to assess the programmes of the parties and candidates and hence make a better choice.

#### **IV. Theoretical Guide**

The significance of theories in every research exercise cannot be overemphasised. Folarin (2005) argues that theories help researchers to manage realities (as cited in Amodu, 2012). The paper is anchored on three theories. They are interactional view theory, social responsibility theory and agenda setting theory.

The interactional view theory was formulated by Paul Watzlawick. It is one of the theories of relationship maintenance. He formed his theory of social interaction by looking at dysfunctional patterns within families in order to gain insight about healthy communication. The theory is based on four axioms: (1) one cannot not communicate, (2) communication = content + relationship, (3) the nature of relationship depends on how both parties punctuate the communication sequence, (4) all communication is either symmetrical or complementary (Griffin, 2000). Although, this theory was designed for relationship maintenance in families, it has application in media and politics, particularly in the communication of the manifesto of a political party or candidate.

The relevance of the theory to the study cannot be over-emphasised. According to the theory, communication is very important in our society. Thus, the bottomline of the theory is that man cannot not communicate. Political parties and candidates must communicate their activities to the electorates so that these electorates understand their policies and programmes.

The social responsibility theory, as noted by Asemah (2011a), is an offshoot of the libertarian theory. The theory sprang up in the middle of 20th century. According to McQuail (1987), "the

social responsibility theory owes its origin to an initiative, Commission on Freedom of the Press. Its main impetus was a growing awareness that in some important respects, the free market had failed to fulfill the promise of the press to deliver expected benefits to society" (p. 123). The social responsibility theory ascribes six basic functions to the press. Cassata and Asante (1978) list these functions to include:

- providing information, discussion and debate on public affairs;
- instructing and informing the public to make it capable of self-government;
- protecting the rights of the individual against government through its watchdog function;
- maintaining the economic equilibrium of the system by bringing together buyer, seller and advertiser;
- Providing entertainment; and
- Remaining independent of outside pressures by maintaining its own economic self-sufficiency (as cited in Obot, 2013, p.175).

Peterson, Siebert and Schramm (1956) have this to say about social responsibility theory:

Freedom carries concomitant obligations and the press which enjoys a privileged position under a government (democratic government) is obliged to be responsible to society for carrying out certain essential tasks of mass communication in contemporary society. To the extent that the press recognises its responsibilities and make them the basis of operational policies, the libertarian system will satisfy the needs of society. To the extent that the press does not assume its responsibilities, some other forces must see that the essential functions of mass communication are carried out. (As cited in Asemah, 2011a, p. 147)



The above assertion simply implies that the media should be socially responsible to the society where they operate. Thus, even when the journalist enjoys freedom, he or she must act responsibly. This also implies that the mass media exist to serve everybody in society. To this end, the social responsibility theory rests on the notion of free press acting responsibly. The theory implores media practitioners to ensure representation of all facets of society. This means that it is obligatory for the journalist to ensure that his good image is maintained in society and should consider the coverage of rural areas as part of the responsibility. According to McQuail (1987), the principles of the social responsibility theory are:

- media should accept and fulfill certain obligations to society;
- these obligations are mainly to be met by setting high or professional standards of informativeness, truth, accuracy, objectivity and balance;
- in accepting and applying these obligations, media should be self-regulating within the framework of law and established institutions;
- the media should avoid whatever might lead to crime, violence, or civil disorders or give offence to minority groups;
- the media as a whole should be pluralist and reflect the diversities of their societies, giving access to various points of views and granting all the right to reply;
- society and the public, following the first named principles, have a right to expect high standards of performance. Intervention can be justified to serve the public good.
- journalists and media professionals should be accountable to society as well as to employers and the market (as cited in Asemah , 2011a, p.149).

The relevance of the theory to the study cannot be overemphasised. Democracy thrives on the principle of an informed electorate making responsible choices and decisions. The mass media

are not only key avenues for providing the required information. They also determine what is available in the public domain. To achieve this, the mass media must discharge their social responsibilities.

The agenda setting theory, as noted by Asemah (2011a), was proposed by Maxwell McCombs and Donald L. Shaw in 1972/1973. The major assumption of the theory is that the media set the agenda for the public to follow. Wimmer and Dominick (2006) observe that the theory on agenda setting by the media proposes that the public agenda or what kinds of things people discuss, think and worry about is powerfully shaped and directed by what the media choose to publicise (as cited in Asemah, 2011a). Folarin (1998) notes that the agenda setting theory implies that the mass media pre-determine the issues that are regarded as important in a society. As averred by Griffin (1991), "the media often choose and emphasise certain topics, thereby causing the public to also choose and emphasise these issues" (p. 49). McQuail (2003) also notes that the media help to "establish an order of priorities in a society about its problems and objectives" (as cited in Obot, 2013, p. 174). McCombs and Shaw state that "audiences not only learn about public issues and other matters through the media, they also learn how much importance to attach to an issue or topic from the emphasis the mass media place upon it" (as cited in Obot, 2013, p. 174). The basic idea is that amongst a given range of issues or topics, those which get more media attention will grow in their familiarity and perceived importance over a period of time and those which get less will decline correspondingly.

Brosius and Weimann (2002) point out that "even though the media may not be very successful in telling us what opinions to hold, they are often quite effective in telling us what to have opinions or what not to think about" (as cited in Obot, 2013, p. 174). By paying attention to such issues and neglecting others, the mass media will have an effect on public opinion. People

will tend to know about these things which the mass media deal with and adopt the order of priority assigned to different issues. Cassata and Asante (1978) also explain that the agenda-setting theory assumes that a direct positive relationship exists between media coverage and the salience of a topic in the public mind. The relationship is stated in causal terms: by conferring status on an issue, the media structure what is important. Going by the agenda setting theory, therefore, the issues that are raised by the media normally draw the attention of the people (as cited in Obot , 2013, p. 174).

## **V. Review of Related Literature**

Information is central to all forms of human activity no matter the field. There is the need for exchange of information to ensure completion of tasks. Inefficiency will be the result where this exchange of information is slow or there is a break down. For this reason, information is regarded as a vital resource that needs to be properly developed, because it has boomerang effect on society. Consequently, a society that has poor communication and information infrastructure perpetually lags behind others that have efficient information infrastructure (Moemeka, 1985 as cited in Asemah, Edegoh, & Anum, 2013, p. 18).

Much is written about the effect that the mass media have upon the presentation and the outcome of political campaigns. Frequently, critics charge that news reporting focuses on the superficial, personal characteristics of candidates and ignores the issues underlying elections. At the same time, it is suggested that the predominance of polling by news outlets turns elections into popularity contests and causes candidates to follow rather than lead voter opinion on contemporary issues (Gottlieb, 1992). Voters are more likely to be swayed by political appeals than are people who have decided whom to choose before a campaign starts (Blood, 1991). This

implies that political campaigns are likely to sway the opinions of the electorate concerning parties and candidates and subsequently influence their choice of candidates.

Ramsden (1996) argues that although the media "might occasionally influence attitudes, they are more frequently effective as a spotlight" (p. 66). According to him, "the media are effective in telling voters what issues to focus on and less effective in telling them what to think of those issues." Since the media are practically the only way to get campaign information widely distributed, they influence what issues people should consider when evaluating a candidate and what criteria to judge them by. Similarly, Robinson (1976) concurs when he notes that "while the media can play an important role in changing voters' perceptions, information, attitudes and even behaviour, their viewpoints do not drastically change and the media have more of a reinforcing role than one in shaping viewpoints" (p. 101). By spotlighting what issues the public should focus on, the media help to dictate what issues voters should be concerned with in elections and what criteria they should use to judge politicians by (Mondak, 1995).

The media can greatly influence the public by limiting coverage of certain candidates. The media have the discretion to cover only the candidates they feel are legitimate candidates and have a realistic chance of winning the election. In this way, the media acts as a filter by narrowing down candidates and sifting out lesser-known candidates and giving more coverage to the better-known. Although the public should ultimately decide on its own who they feel is a viable candidate, Ramsden (1996) notes that the newspaper editors will argue that with so many candidates to cover and with limited resources, it is impossible to cover all candidates equally. Ramsden (1996) says the media should cover all candidates equally so that voters can get to know them all.

Media coverage practically ignores political parties and focuses instead on the candidates themselves (Wattenberg, 1982). This observation has both positive and negative implications. This tends to be a more unbiased approach because it allows voters to become more informed about an individual candidate they are voting for versus blindly voting for a candidate of a particular party. This could potentially cultivate a more diverse electorate. It could, however, be negative if voters focus too much on the candidates themselves and not on the issues the candidate stands for. The media can greatly affect elections by generating attention, whether it is through negative campaigning or through their choice in coverage of a candidate.

A major area where political actors spend money to disseminate their messages to their "consumers" (electorate) is in the area of political advertising. Edegoh, Ezebuenyi and Asemah (2013) see political advertising as one of the types of advertising that over the years has been used by politicians and their well-wishers to convince people to vote for them. In the same vein, Asemah (2010) avers that political advertising is used by politicians to persuade people to vote for them and it is, therefore, part and parcel of the political process in Nigeria and any other democratic society. Political advertising, according to Okoro (1996), is a special type of advertising, which calls for high strategic thinking and action initiative (as cited in Edegoh, Ezebuenyi, & Asemah, 2013). It starts with the objective analysis of the image and appearance of the candidate involved (in the case of human product) or the evaluation of the programme in respect of the issues at stake (in the case of political programme merchandising). Regarding the selling of the candidate to the electorate, as Okoro (1996) maintains, it may involve matters like getting a new haircut or a new suit or assuming particular positions in religious matters (as cited in Edegoh, Ezebuenyi, & Asemah, 2013).

As noted by Olujide, Adeyemi and Gbadeyan (2010), political advertising is the use of media by political candidates to increase their exposure to the public. The extensive use of television and radio has supplanted direct appearances on the campaign trail, which were popularly used by politicians in the past five decades (as cited in Asemah & Edegoh, 2012). According to McNair (2002), political advertising "refers to the purchase and use of advertising, in order to transmit political messages to a mass audience; the media used for this purpose may include place of or in addition to traditional campaign practices such as rallies of the party faithful, political parties and candidates rely on the sophisticated use of the mass media to persuade voters – the "consumers" of political communication – to support them at election time, offering campaigns that feature the appealing personalities of party leaders. Television provides an 'aesthetic' platform for the presentation (airing) of political advertising and electioneering campaign messages. cinema, billboards, the press, radio and television." Swanson (2004) notes that in place of or in addition to traditional campaign practices such as rallies of the party faithful, political parties and candidates rely on the sophisticated use of the mass media to persuade voters – the “consumers” of political communication to support them at election time and they offered campaigns that feature the appealing personalities of party leaders. Television provides an “aesthetic” platform for the presentation (airing) of political advertising and electioneering campaign messages.

Norris (2004) asserts that "fair access to the airwaves by opposition parties, candidates, and groups is critical for competitive, free and fair elections" (p. 121). He points out that it is particularly important that state-owned or public television stations should be open to a plurality of political viewpoints during campaigns, without favouring the government. Corroborating this position, Swanson (2004) maintains that "editorial independence, freedom from close government supervision and censorship, and the like, create credibility for newscasters

everywhere" (p. 202). This, therefore, implies that the media, whether print or electronic, have a crucial role to play in electioneering campaigns. No wonder Reuters Foundation (n.d.) says:

Elections are the cornerstone of any democracy and the media have a vital role in informing the public about what the politicians are promising, in telling the politicians what ordinary people want or do not want and in ensuring that the polls are "free and fair." This is particularly important in countries lacking a solid background of democratic rule.

Semetko (2008) also notes that:

The mass media are the most common source for information about election campaigns in democracies and societies in transition around the world. In terms of the sheer volume of information available to citizens via the media on issues, political parties and leaders, election campaigns often represent a high point for political communications. Concerns about political bias in the mass media are at the heart of debates about the roles and responsibilities of the media at election time. Behind these concerns is the assumption that there may be effects, intended or unintended, on public opinion and political behaviour and ultimately, electoral outcomes.

The above assertion aptly captures the relevance of the media in electioneering campaigns. The media are agents of information dissemination, and they can be used to persuade the populace to accept a particular programme, policy, etc.

## **VI. Method and Materials**

A quantitative research method was used in the study to obtain data. The quantitative research method for this study is the survey. The choice of survey by the researchers was informed by the fact that survey as a technique for generating quantitative data appears to be a potent method of measuring data relating to demographics, attitudes and opinions. More so, Ohaja (2003) avers

that a survey is a study of the characteristics of a sample through questioning, which enables a researcher to make generalisations concerning his population of interest. In addition, the use of a survey for data collection in this study is justified by the fact that it is the most appropriate method of gathering and measuring data relating to demographics, attitude, opinion and perception (Asemah, Gujbawu, Ekharefo, & Okpanachi, 2012).

The population of the study is made up of adult male and females in Jos metropolis. The Official Gazette of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2006) indicates 1,008,477 as the provincial total of Jos Metropolitan Local Government Areas in the 2006 National Population Census. A sample of four hundred and twenty three respondents (423) was taken for the study. This was arrived at, using Cochran's (1963), statistical formula for the determination of sample size.

A purposive sampling technique was used to select four towns in Jos metropolis. These towns include Jos, Bukuru, Rukuba and Zawan. The choice of these towns was informed by the fact that they are the main towns in Jos metropolis where you can get respondents who will give reliable information concerning the subject matter. A purposive sampling was also used to select two public broadcast media in Plateau State. These include Nigerian Television Authority, (NTA, Jos) and Plateau Radio Television Corporation (PRTVC, Jos). Simple random sampling was used to select the four hundred and twenty three respondents (423) from the 4 towns. To ensure that the questionnaire yielded consistent and reliable data, it was pre-tested on twenty respondents in Jos metropolis. The testing took the test-retest method with an interval of two weeks after which the coefficient of reliability was calculated to get the yielded value. To ensure that the instrument for the study measured what it set out to measure, experts in mass communication scrutinised it to ensure its validity.

## **VII. Data Presentation and Analysis**



Out of the four hundred and twenty three (423) copies of the questionnaire distributed, only four hundred and ten copies were retrieved, while four hundred and five (405) copies were found usable. The table below shows the return rate of the questionnaire.

**Table 1**

*Return Rate of the Questionnaires*

| <b>Question</b>           | <b>No. of Respondents</b> | <b>Percentage</b> |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------|
| Returned and found usable | 405                       | 95%               |
| Not usable                | 5                         | 1%                |
| Not returned              | 13                        | 4%                |
| <b>Total distributed</b>  | <b>423</b>                | <b>100%</b>       |

The above table shows that the return rate is 95% while the unreturned/not usable rate is 5%. The return rate is higher than the unreturned/not usable rate. The unreturned/not usable rate of 5% does not affect the study because it is insignificant compared to the return rate of 95%. Thus, the copies were considered adequate enough to represent the population. The presentation and the analysis of the data obtained from the questionnaire were, therefore, based on the 405 copies which were found usable.

**Table 2**

*Educational Qualification*

| <b>Level of Education</b> | <b>No. of Respondents</b> | <b>Percentage</b> |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------|
| PhD                       | 2                         | 1%                |
| M.Sc                      | 48                        | 12%               |
| B.Sc                      | 132                       | 33%               |
| HND                       | 56                        | 14%               |
| OND                       | 81                        | 20%               |
| Undergraduate             | 60                        | 14%               |
| Others                    | 26                        | 6%                |
| <b>Total</b>              | <b>405</b>                | <b>100%</b>       |

**Table 3**

*Sex of Respondents*

| <b>Sex</b>   | <b>No. of Respondents</b> | <b>Percentage</b> |
|--------------|---------------------------|-------------------|
| Male         | 243                       | 60%               |
| Female       | 162                       | 40%               |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>405</b>                | <b>100%</b>       |

**Table 4**

*Occupation of Respondents*

| <b>Occupation</b> | <b>No. of Respondents</b> | <b>Percentage</b> |
|-------------------|---------------------------|-------------------|
| Civil servant     | 111                       | 28%               |
| Self-employed     | 70                        | 17%               |
| Private sector    | 140                       | 35%               |
| Applicant         | 49                        | 12%               |
| Others            | 35                        | 8%                |
| Total             | 405                       | 100%              |

**Table 5**

*Age Range*

| <b>Age Grade</b> | <b>No. of Respondents</b> | <b>Percentage</b> |
|------------------|---------------------------|-------------------|
| 18 – 29          | 165                       | 41%               |
| 30 – 50          | 170                       | 42%               |
| 50 and above     | 70                        | 17%               |
| Total            | 405                       | 100%              |

The age bracket 30 – 50 is considered the most productive grade and is more likely to expose respondents to emotional stability and fairer responses.

**Table 6**

*Marital Status*

| <b>Marital Status</b> | <b>No. of Respondents</b> | <b>Percentage</b> |
|-----------------------|---------------------------|-------------------|
| Single                | 140                       | 35%               |
| Married               | 265                       | 65%               |
| Total                 | 405                       | 100%              |

The respondents were asked about the extent to which the government-owned broadcast media paid attention to electioneering campaigns in Plateau State during the 2011 gubernatorial elections. Table 7 below summarizes the results.

**Table 7**

*The Extent of Paying Attention to Electioneering Campaigns by Government-Owned Media*

| <b>The extent of broadcast media coverage of the 2011 gubernatorial electioneering campaigns in Plateau State</b> | <b>NTA, Jos</b> | <b>PRTVC, Jos</b> |
|---|-----------------|-------------------|
| To a very great extent  | 43%             | 59%               |
| To a great extent   | 31%             | 28%               |
| Cannot say  | 26%             | 13%               |
| Total   | 100%            | 100%              |

In Table 7, 43% of the respondents agreed that the extent to which the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) covered the 2011 gubernatorial elections was very great while 59% of the respondents agreed that the extent to which Plateau Radio Television Corporation (PRTVC) paid attention to the election was a very great one. 31% of the respondents agreed that the extent to which NTA paid attention was great while 28% said that the coverage of PRTVC was 'to a great extent.' Thus, the data show that the Plateau Radio Television Corporation (PRTVC) paid more attention to the gubernatorial electioneering campaigns.

The respondents were also asked about the political parties which they thought received more coverage from the government-owned media in Plateau State during the gubernatorial elections in 2011. Table 8 sums up respondents' opinion in this regard.

**Table 8**

***Which Parties Received More Coverage from the Government-Owned Media?***

| S/N | Which Party Was Getting More Coverage? | Strongly Agree | Agree | Undecided | Disagree | Strongly Disagree | Total | Decision |
|-----|--|----------------|-------|-----------|----------|-------------------|-------|----------|
| 1.  | People's Democratic Party (PDP)        | 255            | 109   | 1         | 24       | 17                | 4.3   | Accepted |
| 2.  | All Nigerians' People Party (ANPP)     | 41             | 29    | 14        | 111      | 210               | 1.9   | Rejected |
| 3.  | Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN)       | 19             | 33    | 5         | 233      | 115               | 1.5   | Rejected |
| 4.  | African Democratic Party (ADC)         | 5              | 2     | 0         | 201      | 197               | 1.6   | Rejected |
| 5.  | All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA) | 10             | 12    | 0         | 241      | 143               | 1.7   | Rejected |
| 6   | Congress for Progressive Change (CPC)  | 9              | 5     | 0         | 270      | 122               | 1.7   | Rejected |
| 7   | Labour Party (LP)                      | 31             | 37    | 0         | 202      | 135               | 2.0   | Rejected |
| 8   | Mega Progressive People's Party        | 2              | 3     | 0         | 252      | 138               | 1.6   | Rejected |

|   |                                     |   |   |   |     |     |     |          |
|---|-------------------------------------|---|---|---|-----|-----|-----|----------|
|   | (MPPP)                              |   |   |   |     |     |     |          |
| 9 | Progressive People's Alliance (PPA) | 1 | 2 | 0 | 207 | 195 | 1.5 | Rejected |

The data in Table 8 show that the ruling party (People's Democratic Party) got the highest coverage during the 2011 gubernatorial electioneering campaigns in Plateau State. This is evident in the highest number of respondents who agreed to that effect.

The respondents were asked whether political advertisement of the ruling party (PDP) through the government-owned broadcast media was responsible for the success in the 2011 gubernatorial elections in Plateau State. Table 9 summarizes the results.

**Table 9**

*Was Political Advertisement of the PDP Responsible for Success in the Elections?*

| Variables | Frequency | Percentages |
|-----------|-----------|-------------|
| Yes       | 299       | 74%         |
| No        | 106       | 26%         |
| Total     | 405       | 100%        |

Out of the four hundred and five copies of questionnaire received, 299 respondents (74%) agreed while the remaining 106 respondents (26%) disagreed.

The next question asked to the respondents was whether the agenda setting role of the broadcast media had any influence on party/candidate's choice during the 2011 gubernatorial elections in Plateau State.

**Table 10**

*Did Broadcast Media Agenda Setting Role Influence Party/Candidate's Choice?*

| Variables | Frequency | Percentages |
|-----------|-----------|-------------|
| Yes       | 310       | 77%         |
| No        | 95        | 23%         |
| Total     | 405       | 100%        |

This shows that agenda setting role of the media contributed to the choice of candidate during the 2011 gubernatorial elections in Plateau State.

The last question for respondents was whether the residents of Jos metropolis were satisfied with the way and manner the government-owned media covered the 2011 gubernatorial electioneering campaigns in Plateau State.

**Table 11**

*Satisfaction with the Government-Owned Media Coverage of the Elections*

| <b>Question</b>     | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentages</b> |
|---------------------|------------------|--------------------|
| Very satisfactory   | 41               | 10%                |
| Satisfactory        | 28               | 7%                 |
| Very unsatisfactory | 181              | 45%                |
| Unsatisfactory      | 144              | 35%                |
| Do not Know         | 11               | 3%                 |
| Total               | 280              | 100%               |

The data in Table 11 show that the respondents were not satisfied with the way and manner the government-owned broadcast media covered the 2011 gubernatorial electioneering campaigns in Plateau State. This is evident in the highest percentage of those who ticked very unsatisfactory (45%) and unsatisfactory (35%).

**VIII. Results and Discussion of Findings**

The findings show that Plateau Radio and Television Corporation (PRTVC, Jos) and Nigerian Television Authority (NTA, Jos) covered the 2011 gubernatorial electioneering campaigns in Plateau State. The findings, however, show that the Plateau State-owned PRTVC, Jos, paid more attention to the gubernatorial electioneering campaigns than the Federal government-owned Nigerian Television Authority. The data indicate that PRTVC covered the gubernatorial electioneering campaigns to a very great extent. The media have a crucial role to play during elections as they are used to sell political candidates and parties. No wonder Asemah (2009)

argues that the media are used for political campaigns. Politicians need the media. Thus, they use them to disseminate information during elections.

The findings further show that the ruling party (PDP) received more coverage than the other political parties during the 2011 gubernatorial elections in Plateau State. The media are bound to operate with the interest of the owners in mind. This perhaps explains why Asemah (2011b) posits the following:

The owner of a media house can dictate what to be reported. This is mostly done when he wants to use the media to protect his interest. This is because "he who plays the piper dictates the tune." In most cases, the owner of a media house mounts pressure on the journalist or the editor to publish a particular story. Most reporters often succumb to these pressures. The mass media do not operate in vacuum. They are owned and controlled by both the government and individuals. These media owners in most cases exert a lot of pressures on the operations of their media just to advance their interests. The ownership of the media has a serious influence on the media operations. In most cases, they force the media managers to publish certain stories that are not supposed to be published. The fact remains that a newspaper or news media manager who does not want to lose his job has no option than to abide by the dictates of the media owner. The political and economic system within which the media operate, partially, also determines their roles.

The above assertion shows that the owners of the media determine the kinds of programme to be carried out at a given time. This also explains why Asemah and Ekerikevwe (2013) contend that the owners of a media house have influence not just by direct intervention or by establishing lines that cannot be crossed; they set the tone, they decide which markets to target, they control

editorial budgets and they hire and fire their editors, who are their representatives in the media world.

Results further show that political advertising contributed to the success of People's Democratic Party's (PDP) in the 2011 gubernatorial elections in Plateau State. The PDP ran political advertisements in Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) and Plateau Radio Television Corporation (PRTVC) before and during the elections, and this possibly contributed a great deal to the success of the party. This, therefore, means that political advertising contributed a great deal to the success of candidates during the elections. Similarly, Kogah (2006) contends that political advertising functions to communicate the attributes of the politician that relates to the constituent's needs and the candidate, in turn, gains the voter's confidence and votes (as cited in Ottah, 2013). Stressing the danger associated with undue government and institutional control, Akinyele (2003) insists that there is the tendency always to want to please the powers that be or fingers that feed the media practitioner, to the detriment of development ideals (as cited in Asemah & Ekerikevwe, 2013). There is the popular saying that "he who plays the piper dictates the tune." Most media houses in Nigeria are owned by the government and, in many cases, they end-up being the mouthpiece of the government, which is for communicating government's various activities to the populace. This, according to Nwosu (1996), does not make for balanced, extensive and fair communication (as cited in Asemah and Ekerikevwe, 2013).

Findings further show that the media agenda setting function had a significant influence on the choice of party and candidate during the 2011 gubernatorial elections in Plateau State. The majority of respondents (77%) agreed to this effect. The media generally impact the audience through their influencing power by repeatedly presenting issues and news reports about news events, political candidates and issues in the public mind. The candidate of People's Democratic



Party (PDP), Da David Jonah Jang, was repeatedly featured in the government-owned broadcast in Plateau State during the electioneering campaigns. This definitely contributed to the success of the PDP. Other parties were not featured the way PDP was featured. Playing the agenda-setting role by focusing on the most acceptable candidate, the media paved the way for the electorates to view the candidates based on their yardstick as who should be elected. This perhaps explains why Grabber (1990) argues that "besides calling attention to matters of potential public concern, the media also provide cues to the public about the degree of importance of an issue." Graber's assertion aptly captures the agenda setting function of the mass media in modern societies. The foregoing implies that the media do exert power which is evident in their role as agenda-setters during election campaigns. The findings also show that the respondents were dissatisfied with the way and manner the media covered the 2011 gubernatorial elections in Plateau State.

### **IX. Summary and Conclusion**

The media have a crucial role to play during elections in any part of the world. They generally set the agenda for the public to follow. The findings show that Nigerian Television Authority (NTA, Jos) and Plateau Radio Television Corporation (PRTVC, Jos) did not give equal coverage to all the political parties that contested the 2011 gubernatorial elections in Plateau State. PDP which is the ruling party got more coverage than the other political parties. Moreover, the findings show that Jos residents considered broadcast media coverage of electioneering campaigns during the 2011 gubernatorial elections very unsatisfactory. The paper, therefore, recommends that the media should endeavour to give equal treatment to political parties that contest any given election. Only then mass media can be seen as being credible.

### **X. Limitations of the Study and Suggestions for Further Study**

The study is limited to Jos metropolis. Four local government areas make up Jos metropolis. Plateau State has a total of seventeen local government areas, but only four that make up Jos metropolis were selected. However, despite the exclusion of the other local government areas in the state, the data collected were sufficient as a basis for conclusion for the entire state as they share a lot of similarities. Moreover, the population of Jos metropolis (1,008,477) is sufficient to make valid generalisations for the perception of government-owned media coverage of the 2011 gubernatorial elections in Plateau State. Therefore, future researchers on a similar subject matter should endeavour to expand the scope of the study covering other areas. Future researchers may decide to expand the study to the three senatorial zones of Plateau State, Nigeria. In addition, the study only covered the public broadcast media in Plateau State. Future researchers should endeavour to cover the private and public media houses in Plateau State.

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