

Marketing Strategy Implementation and the Succuss of Political Branding in Rivers State

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Abstract: *This study examined the relationship between marketing strategy implementation and success of political branding in Rivers State. A literature review of concepts such as marketing strategy, political brand image, political brand identity, political brand trust were done. The study adopted a correlational design. The population of the study consists of the three major political parties (All Progressives Congress (APC), the People's Democratic Party (PDP), and the Labour Party (LP)) in Rivers State. These main political parties in Rivers State were the subject of this study, with special emphasis on their electoral bases and campaign groups. The explanation of the major political parties' campaign groups was limited to political parties with much popularity from the last concluded general elections. The study concentrated on two major Local Government Areas (LGAs) in Rivers State, which are the Port Harcourt City Local Government Area and the Obio/Akpor Local Government Area. The study further adopted the random sampling technique to draw four key informants (party chairman, vice chairman, secretary and woman leader) from five Wards in the two LGAs to arrive at twenty (20) members from each of the political party's campaign groups as participants. This amounted to one hundred and twenty (120) respondents. One hundred and twenty (120) copies of structured questionnaire Data for the study were collected through a 25 item questionnaire administered to the respondents. A total of one hundred and twenty (120) copies of the questionnaires produced were distributed to the respondents. Of the 120 copies of questionnaire that were distributed to the respondents, 117 copies were returned, yielding a response rate of 97.5%. The remaining 3 (2.5%) copies produced and distributed were not returned and were unaccounted for. However, the returned usable rate of 97.5 % was considered sufficient for the analysis. Three research objectives guided this study and the corresponding three hypotheses were formulated. The Kendall tau_b correlation was employed as the analytical tool in testing the formulated hypotheses. The study revealed that marketing strategy implementation correlates success of political brand image, political brand trust and political brand identity. The study therefore concludes that marketing strategy implementation positively and significantly correlates with the success of political branding in Rivers State, and recommends that, Leaders of political parties should embark on effective marketing strategy implementation to substantially correlate the success of political branding of their candidates and build and display the image, trust and identity of their parties that will usher in effective representation, adoption of corporate citizenship behavior and adherence to honesty and justice that ought to be evidenced in delivering their campaign promises to the electorates and hence build trust in their party over time.*

Keywords: *Brand identity, brand image, brand trust, marketing strategy implementation, political branding.*

I. INTRODUCTUION

In the world today, cynicism, volatility and uncertainty are not only common concepts prevalent to the work settings and the commercial platforms, but also to the political world (Ahmed, Lodhi, Shahzad, & Ahmad, 2012), and of which, Nigeria isn't an exception. Marsh and Fawcett (2011) explained that most of these challenges, such as cynicism, volatility and uncertainty as encountered in the world of politics are central to poorly induced marketing strategies. They further noted that, marketing strategies allows for the inclusion of the peoples' interests in designing policies and political plans. No wonder Sunny, Peace, and Sylva (2021) emphasized that the political landscape of Nigeria has been filled with much turbulence, and can only be rebranded if and only if political image, party identity and trust can be properly managed.

Feyipitan (2015) asserted that for political acceptability to thrive, political parties and partisans must first market their political party by effectively communicating what their party can do from her mapped out policies, ideologies and the intended planned strategies in achieving these set objectives. Marketing strategy involves the plans to meeting organizational objectives, in relation to synchronizing customers' needs satisfaction and organizational sustainability (Hazira, Alagas, Amin, Zamzuri & Zairul, 2022). The inability of most political parties to showcase and popularize their parties through campaigns has left Nigerians to be saturated with the activities of only two major parties. It is no longer news, to hear common names like the All Progressives Congress and the Peoples' Democratic Party in the mouth of electorates. They even question the popularity of a candidate, based on his/her political party (Feyipitan, 2015).

Political branding cannot only be limited to designs and logos, but must include the corporate image of the party, its consistency, the level of trust the people have in the party based on its showcased identity (Peng & Hackley, 2009; Phipps, Brace-Govan, & Jevons, 2010). As noted by Kotler and Armstrong (2018), all forms of marketing are centered around the product, price, place and promotion. This implies that political party marketing strategy are marketing activities geared towards the promotion of the political party, as well as her candidates, draws attention to the place of the party/candidate (product) in the political stake, and tries to demonstrate what the electorates stand to gain by associating with the party/candidates (price). On this backdrop lies every marketing strategy, whether it be political or digital (Phipps, Brace-Govan, & Jevons, 2010; Sunny *et al.*, 2021).

Most political campaigns in Rivers State has featured several musicians in a bid to design songs that are relevant to the policies of the parties, the personalities behind the candidature of the parties and in relation to the culture of the people. In the guide of Kotler and Armstrong (2013), marketing strategies involves activities that promote and create both competitive and comparative advantages for the organization for which such strategy was adopted. It may include other strategies such as affinity marketing, content marketing, digital marketing and alliance marketing and so on and so forth (Akinseye, Onimole, Ekundayo, & Adebuseye, 2022). Furthermore, they noted that all strategies are geared towards a common, which is meeting the marketing demands and creating the desired and required competitive advantage.

Campaign strategies are part of electioneering processes and they hold great impact on the voting behaviours of the electorates (Omenma, Onu,& Omenma, 2016). Following this, every political party tries its best to ensure that they market their party and her candidates squarely during political campaigns. This implies that political campaigns in the political world, is a marketing platform, while all necessary activities are tagged as the marketing strategies. The write up by Fabiyi and Olokor (2014) mentioned that political campaigns are vital to electioneering and it determines the acceptability and popularity of any political party and their fielded candidates. As the Nigerian electorates become more aware and sensitive to the travails of money politics, and its aftermath on the people, political parties have seen the need to market their candidates using various means such as campaigns (Idowu,& Etinosa, 2013).

Egbulefu and Emeke (2023) claimed that political campaigns are designed strategically just to garner support for political parties and her candidates, and also to possibly influence voters' behavior. Furthermore, they noted that elections cannot be devoid of political campaigns. With the high level of dynamism in politics, and specifically the Nigerian politics, the traditional activities of campaigns may not influence the choices of people as strategically marketing political parties and its candidates. No wonder the work of Osuagwu (2008) and Khatib (2012) noted that politics and voting behavior are highly influenced by the marketing strategies adopted during the elections.

Following the multiple transitional democracies in Nigeria, the stage of transition from military rule to this present democratic dispensation, the electorates are becoming more aware of the influence of political campaigns and it has pitched a common ground in our politics of today (Bailard, & Livingston, 2014). As a result, political parties and politicians all over the world invest a lot of money in political campaigns to position themselves as the electorate's favorite brand. It's interesting that the majority of questions posed during elections relate to voting behavior and the popularity of the party and her candidates (Mascheroni & Mattoni, 2013; Olabamiji, 2014), specifically the reasons voters chose one candidate over another and the implications of their decision (Lewis, 2011). Zou and Cavusgil (2002) defined marketing strategy as the activities put forward by a firm in order to establish a positive relationship with its stakeholders, the allocation of resources, its offerings and timing. They went further to explain that these strategies are proxied in standardization-adaptation, configuration-coordination, and strategic integration. Therefore, this paper examined how marketing strategy and the metrics of political branding (brand image, brand identity and brand trust) can be used to strategically penetrate the people and develop their party/candidature as evidenced from Rivers State political campaigns. The following objectives and hypotheses guided this study;

- i. To ascertain the relationship between marketing strategy and political brand image in strategically marketing political party/candidature as seen from political campaigns in Rivers State.
- ii. To examine the relationship between marketing strategy an brand trust in strategically marketing political party/candidature as seen from political campaigns in Rivers State.

- iii. To investigate the relationship between marketing strategy and political brand identity has in strategically marketing political party/candidature as seen from political campaigns in Rivers State.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES

Marketing Strategy Implementation

The creation, communication, and/or delivery of products that offer value to customers in exchanges with the organization constitutes an organization's integrated pattern of decisions known as its marketing strategy (Varadarajan, 2010), and this decision-making process enables the organization to achieve specific goals. Marketing strategy systems are goal-setting procedures used as future-oriented decision-making frameworks to define desired goals and identify and select marketing options that may enable these goals to be accomplished, followed by a period of enactment in which firms seek to operationalize the intended strategic decisions, according to Morgan (2012) and Kumar, Sharma, and Gupta (2017).

An organization's marketing strategy outlines the organization's marketing objectives and offers suggestions for achieving them (Luo & Homburg, 2008). Additionally, they pointed out that marketing strategy aids in determining the advantages and disadvantages of the business and its rivals. The areas on which the corporation must concentrate its marketing methods are identified with the aid of the marketing strategy (Slotegraaf & Atuahene-Gima, 2011). Morgan, Katsikeas, and Vorhies (2012) averred that a marketing strategy is a method or a model that enables a business or organization to concentrate its limited resources on the most promising prospects for growing sales and securing a long-term competitive advantage.

Marketing strategy encompasses all fundamental and long-term activities in the field of marketing that are concerned with the analysis of a company's strategic initial situation as well as the formulation, evaluation, and choice of market-oriented strategies (Kumar, Dixit, Javalgi, & Dass, 2016). Additionally, they noted that, marketing strategy supports the objectives of the company's marketing as well as its overall goals. A marketing strategy, in the opinion of Morgan and Rego (2006), need to have a minimum of a mission statement, goals, and targeted approach that focuses on particular market groups and product positioning. A company's marketing strategy should explicitly state how its marketing activities will be carried out, according to Morgan, Katsikeas, and Vorhies (2012). This because, a company's marketing strategy "delineates the direction of marketing efforts in order to generate a competitive advantage" (Ikegwuru & Pokubo, 2019:33)

The Concept of Political Branding

Choice making is one difficult aspect of decision, and brand knowledge makes this difficulty easier to handle (Parker, 2012; Veloutsu, 2015). Veloutsu (2015) asserts that whether the political, commercial, or human, branding helps give the financial value of any product or service. Political branding is defined as the systematic use of commercial branding concepts, frameworks, ideologies to the political systems so as set and develop a differentiated political platform with a

unique identity and competitive advantage from other political entities and the citizenry at large (Harris & Lock 2010). Needham and Smith (2015) asserts that political brands have developed significantly over many years, through commonly shared ideologies, assemblies, engagements, candidates and campaign strategies.

Sheinheit and Bogard (2016) defined political branding as political and party activities which are closely associated to functioning in making the political party and her candidates secure the votes of the electorates. They went further to explain that these activities are central to creating the needed appeal through consistency, trust, honesty, reputation and image of the party or its candidates. Dumitrica (2014) and Needham (2005) defined political branding as the communication of the party, candidates and policies to the people through political campaigns. Marcus (2010) noted that the sole focus of political branding is creating the concept of electability in the minds of the people. Speeds, Butler and Collins (2015) averred that political branding are closely tied to three dimensions, the person, the ideology and the party.

Political brands are stationed and set by political actors in the light in which they intend the citizens to view their political brand and party, and this helps them to draw out a sustainable ideology for the brand (Billard, 2018; Meyerrose, 2017). Nielsen (2016) noted that political branding gives insight that allows political entities to strategically initiate the development and management of the party as intended (Simons, 2016). Scammell (2015) acclaimed that political branding consists of three major perspectives, which he noted to be the party, the leader and the policies. Nai and Martinez (2019) proposed that though political branding may be difficult to define, it should be seen as an extension of the marketing research that focuses on reputation, identity, and the image of which the organization wants the brand to be seen.

Political branding refers to how the public generally perceives a political organization or individual (Meyerrose, 2017). It is more comprehensive than the product; as it is psychological and ethereal, involving both the politicians and the policies (Needham & Smith, 2015). An individual politician, political party, or country's overall reputation among the public is referred to as its political branding (Guzmán, Paswan, & Van Steenburg, 2015). Marland (2019) proposed that political branding assists the party or candidate in fostering a sense of identity with the party or its candidates, changing or maintaining reputation and support, and building a rapport of trust between political leaders and the general public. It facilitates political consumers' understanding of a party's or candidate's platform and aids in differentiating one from the opposition (Marland & Flanagan, 2014).

Tuskej, Golob and Podnar (2011) assert that brands are the long term strategies used by organizations to build trust, customers' loyalty and also to tell the general public what value their product or services have for them. They went further to explain that branding can be manipulated through its designing and framing, but one constant factor that no one can take away from branding is uniqueness. Falkowski and Jabłońska (2019) noted that political branding does not only depict the party's or candidates' image, but showcases the intellectual value identity, which transcends beyond the functional use-value of the party/candidate, but induces emotional connections. No wonder, Scammell (2007) depicted that political branding gives a sense of the analytical value embedded in any political party or its candidate.

Dion and Arnould (2016) noted that while political branding is very important is that it is very difficult to separate a person from the party, both in terms of ideologies and his/her personality. This statement implies that political branding helps polish the party in a better light to the electorates. Kaneva and Klemmer (2016) see political branding to be related to the authenticity and authority of the personality of the persons. Zaif (2016) identified that branding does not only help in creating the required awareness, but factually aids every organizational marketing strategy that is adopted. He went further to note that branding in politics, strategically markets the party and her candidature. The dimensions of political branding as used in this study are political brand image, political brand identity and political brand trust. These concepts depict the focus of political branding.

Political Brand Image

Hsiang-Ming, Ching-Chi and Cou-Chen (2011) in their research article averred that brand image can be defined as the sentiments in which customers or consumers have towards a particular brand. They went further to explain that it is the image of the brand that informs the decisions of the consumers. The image of a brand can be developed and directed towards a long term memorability that will encourage customer loyalty and trust (Erfan & Kwek, 2013; Cho, 2011). Anwar, Gulzar, Sohail, and Akram (2011) assert that brand image can be understood as a depiction of unique imagery created by customers in association to the brand, and majorly includes significant profile of the brand-related data. In addition, they pointed out that if a business consistently upholds a favorable and ideal public image, it will benefit from a better market share and an expanding competitive edge.

Citizens' decisions to vote without giving it any further thought will be directly influenced by the political party's brand image (Audrey, 2018). The political party's brand image will be based on the image power, authority, authenticity, services, consistency, and numerous advancements made during its previous participation year. In addition, political brands image plays a part, independent of politicians in boosting political power. Consumer or voters' behavior is influenced by brand image, which is the general opinion and sentiment of voters toward political brands (Zhang, 2015). According to Huang (2017), the process of mutual communication between brand stimulation and customer perception is known as brand image.

According to Lee, Tseng, and Chan (2019), brand image is derived from customer evaluation of the brand and will play a significant role in consumers' decision-making while making purchases. The study finds that customers' purchase intentions are strengthened by brand image (Chen, Yeh, & Huan, 2014). Additionally, businesses or political organizations and parties can cultivate their brand image to increase political brand value, and equity, which can be built up to produce voters' acceptability (Bailey & Ball, 2006).

Political Brand Identity

Aaker and Joachimsthaler (2000) reiterated that brand identity is one of the most important challenges organizations go through to distinguish their product. They noted that in branding of products, having an identity helps in creating a lasting memorability of the product or the service. Anchoring on this statement, it implies that political party identity is the mark for which the

members and the party is remembered with. It goes beyond just the political party name, slogan, core, or mark, but transcends down to the created strong emotional connections with the brand. No wonder the work of Chien and Chen (2017) noted that brand identity brings both psychological and behavioral associations in relation to the brand. They went further to note that, brand identity which are the visible elements of the brand; like color, logo and design, can be used to create positive impressions in the minds of consumers.

Some "subcomponents of brand identity include the brand's objective, increasing brand awareness, setting the company apart from competitors, and what the brand offers to the specific consumers and their benefits" (Sääksjärvi & Samiee, 2011, 13). "Customer impression of a brand affects the brand's relative strength in the market where it competes and, as a result, can affect the brand's market value," claim Shankar, Azar, and Fuller (2008). Furthermore, they noted that customers are more likely to find a brand appealing when it reflects their own sense of duty or includes and expresses who they are because they see brand identity as a crucial component of life in the context of political commitment.

Buil, Catalan, and Martinez(2015) averred that brand identity helps political actors to behave, think and act in a certain manner that will portray the political party in the certain desired light. Political brand identity shapes the corporate look of the party, and reintroduces the ideologies of the party's reputation and image for a concerted positive outlook (Kapferrer, 2004). Furthermore, he noted that brand identity creates a feeling of political attractiveness in relation to the political party and her candidates, which further gives political parties the much sorted loyalty and voters' acceptability.

Political Brand Trust

The ability of a political brand to fulfill or deliver on its brand promise to its constituency is referred to as brand trust (Schallehn, Burmann & Riley, 2014). This trust, which is tied to brand intents that are inherently very motivating, makes voters believe that the political brand will act in the best interests of its constituents. When a certain political party brand is seen to have a high consistency, it must have kept its promise at each and every brand touch point, and it induces political party trust (Osuagwu, 2008). Brand trust assesses those traits that are exhibited by their repeating current brand behavior, and those that are favored by these behaviours will trust the political party or her candidates (Huang, & Lai, 2017).

"A willingness to rely on an exchange partner from whom has confidence" is how Moorman, Zaltman, and Deshpande (1992:4) described trust."The willingness of consumers to rely on the ability of brands to perform stated functions," according to Chudhuri and Holbrook (2001) is the definition of brand trust.The readiness of the average consumer to depend on a brand's ability to fulfill the tasks that it communicates is one of trust's many significant advantages (Grant, Juntunen, Juga, & Juntunen, 2014).Most marketing studies consider brand trust to be multifaceted, and according to reports, trust is an important component of brand credibility in brand equity acceptance (Keller, & Aaker, 1992), and it is essential to the growth of loyalty and is possibly the most effective relationship marketing tool a firm has (Reichheld, & Schefter, 2000).

Based on the review of literature, the following conceptual framework was developed:

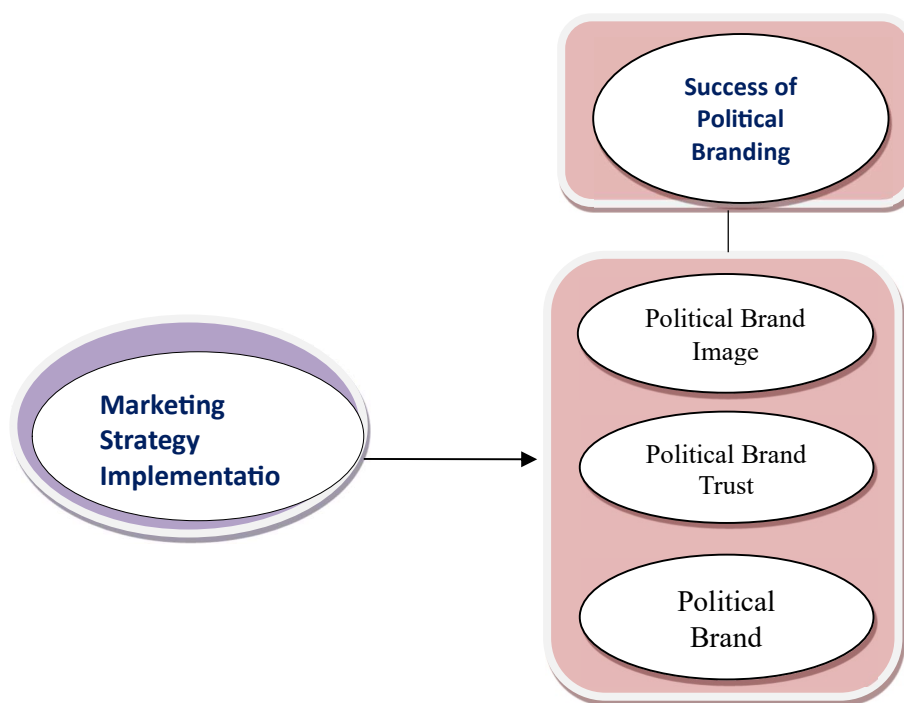


Fig. 1: Conceptual framework on the relationship between political branding and marketing strategy.

Source: Author's Research Desk, 2023.

From the conceptual framework, the following hypotheses were raised:

- Ho₁:** There is no significant relationship between marketing strategy implementation and political brand image in strategically marketing political party/candidature as seen from political campaigns in Rivers State.
- Ho₂:** There is no significant relationship between marketing strategy implementation and political brand trust in strategically marketing political party/candidature as seen from political campaigns in Rivers State.
- Ho₃:** There is no significant relationship between marketing strategy implementation and leader political brand identity in strategically marketing political party/candidature as seen from political campaigns in Rivers State.

III. METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a correlational design. The population of the study consists of the three major political parties (All Progressives Congress (APC), the People's Democratic Party (PDP), and the Labour Party (LP)) in Rivers State. These main political parties in Rivers State were the subject of this study, with special emphasis on their electoral bases and campaign groups. The explanation of the major political parties' campaign groups was limited to political parties with much popularity from the last concluded general elections. The study concentrated on two major Local

Government Areas (LGAs) in Rivers State, which are the Port Harcourt City Local Government Area and the Obio/Akpor Local Government Area. The study further adopted the random sampling technique to draw four key informants (party chairman, vice chairman, secretary and woman leader) from five Wards in the two LGAs to arrive at twenty (20) members from each of the political party's campaign groups as participants. This amounted to one hundred and twenty (120) respondents. One hundred and twenty (120) copies of structured questionnaire were distributed to these respondents. This is illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1: The population distribution based on the investigated political parties as collected from the field.

S/N	Respondents	PHALGA	OBALGA	Total
1	APC	20	20	40
2	PDP	20	20	40
3	LP	20	20	40
	Total	60	60	120

Source: Field Data, 2023.

The questionnaire was used as a primary source from which the information for this study was gathered. Simple and direct questions were used throughout the questionnaire for gathering answers to the questions concerning marketing strategy, political brand identity, political brand trust, and political brand image on a 5-point Likert scale format anchored on Very high =5, High=4, Moderate =3, Low=2, and Extremely low =1).

Predictor variable, which is marketing strategy, was measured against the criterion variable political branding operationalized in political brand identity, political brand image and the political brand trust. These variables had a total of 20 items: marketing strategy (5) items political brand identity (5), political brand image (5), political brand trust (5), and political branding (5). The demographic questions had five (5) items. Each respondent was asked to complete a 25-item structured survey questionnaire. Data collected was coded, keyed in the computer and analyzed with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), version 25. The Kendall Tau_b was the adopted inferential statistics which was used to test the formulated hypotheses.

Reliability of the Instrument

At the end of the survey, the reliability scale was further examined by computing their coefficient alpha (Cronbach alpha). All scales were found to surpass a minimum threshold of 0.7. The exact results of the scale reliability analysis are reported in Table 2.

Table 2: Shows the reliability measure of Marketing Strategy Implementation and Success of Political Branding (n=120).

S/N	ITEM	NUMBER OF ITEMS	CRONBACH'S ALPHA
1.	Marketing Strategy Implementation	5	.850
2.	Political Brand Image	5	.843
3.	Political Brand Trust	5	.803
4.	Political Brand Identity	5	.805
5.	Political Branding	5	.849

Source: SPSS 22.0 Output (based on 2023 field survey data).

Table 2 summarizes the reliability result of the marketing strategy implementation and the metrics of political branding, which also includes the individual item reliability test. Significantly, all items are reliable and are used to study marketing strategy and political branding among political parties in Rivers State. The extent of the association between perceived quality and purchase intention can be operationalised using marketing strategy implementation (.850) with a 5-item measure; political brand image (.843) with a 5-item measure, political brand trust (.805) with 5-item measure, political brand identity (.803) with a 5-item measure, and political branding (.849) with a 5-item measure.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Data for the study were collected through a 25 item questionnaire administered to the respondents. A total of one hundred and twenty (120) copies of the questionnaires produced were distributed to the respondents. Of the 120 copies of questionnaire that were distributed to the respondents, 117 copies were returned, yielding a response rate of 97.5%. The remaining 3 (2.5%) copies produced and distributed were not returned and were unaccounted for. However, the returned usable rate of 97.5 % was considered sufficient for the analysis.

Decision rule: “The decision rule which applies for all bivariate test outcomes is stated as follows: where $P < 0.05$, reject hypothesis on the basis of evidence significant relationship; and where $P > 0.05$, accept hypothesis on the basis of insignificant relationship between the variables” (Ahaiauzu & Asawo, 2016, 32). “The extent of relationship is on this basis assessed using the tau_b interpretations provided” by Ahaiauzu and Asawo (2016:56) as shown in table 2:

Table 3: Description on Range of correlation (Tau_b) values and the corresponding level of association

• Range of r with positive and negative sign values	Strength of Association
• $\pm 0.80 - 0.99$	Very Strong
• $\pm 0.60 - 0.79$	Strong
• $\pm 0.40 - 0.59$	Moderate
• $\pm 0.20 - 0.39$	Weak
• $\pm 0.00 - 0.19$	Very Weak

Source: Adopted from Ahaiauzu & Asawo, 2016, *Advance Social Research Methods*

The values of (tau_b) with a positive (+) sign indicate a positive link, whereas those with a negative (-) sign suggest an indirect/negative or inverse relationship. The direction of association between the two variables is thus explained by the sign of the tau_b. The aforementioned table serves as our yardstick for assessing the degree of correlation between the dimensions' and measures' understudied variables. These relationships range from very weak to very strong as seen from the Table 3.

Statistical Test of Hypotheses

Relationship between Marketing Strategy Implementation and Success of Political Brand Image

Table 4: Table showing correlation between marketing strategy implementation and political brand image (n=117).

		Marketing Strategy Implementation	Political Brand Image
Kendall's tau_b	Political Brand Image	Correlation Coefficient	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.611**
		N	.000
	Marketing Strategy Implementation	Correlation Coefficient	.611**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	1.000
		N	.000

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: Research Data, 2023

With a Kendall tau_b value of 0.611, Table 4 demonstrates a significant and favorable correlation between marketing strategy implementation and success of political brand image. This suggests that the correlation between the two variables is strong. As observed from the responses gathered from political campaigns in Rivers State, there is a significant positive correlation between marketing strategy implementation and success of political brand image. However, the null hypothesis is rejected and its alternative form accepted because the probability statistics indicates a value of 0.000, which is less than 0.05, at the 95% confidence interval for which the calculations were done. Accordingly there is a substantial relationship between marketing strategy implementation and the success of political brand image for political party/candidate as seen from political campaigns in Rivers State.

Relationship between Marketing Strategy Implementation and Success of Political Brand Trust

Table 5: Table showing correlations between marketing strategy implementation and success of political brand trust (n=117).

		Marketing Strategy Implementation	Political Brand Trust
Kendall's tau_b	Political Brand Trust	Correlation Coefficient	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.609**
		N	.000
	Marketing Strategy Implementation	Correlation Coefficient	.609**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	1.000
		N	.000

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: Research Data, 2023

With a Kendall tau_b value of 0.609, Table 5 demonstrates a significant and favorable association between marketing strategy implementation and political brand trust. This suggests that the correlation between the two variables is strong. As observed from the data provided in response to political campaigns in Rivers State, there is a significant correlation between marketing strategy implementation and political brand trust. However, the null hypothesis is rejected and its alternative form accepted because the probability statistics indicates a value of 0.000, which is less than 0.05, at the 95% confidence interval for which the calculations were done. Accordingly there is a substantial relationship between marketing strategy implementation and the success of political brand trust for political party/candidate as seen from political campaigns in Rivers State.

Relationship between Marketing Strategy Implementation and Success of Political Brand Identity

Table 6: Table showing correlations between marketing strategy implementation and success of political brand identity (n=117).

		Marketing Strategy Implementation	Political Brand Identity
Kendall's tau _b	Political Brand Identity	Correlation Coefficient	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.807**
		N	.000
	Marketing Strategy Implementation	Correlation Coefficient	117
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.807**
		N	.000

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: Research Data, 2023

With a Kendall tau_b value of 0.807, Table 6 demonstrates a significant and favorable correlation between marketing strategy implementation and success of political brand identity. This suggests that the correlation between the two variables is very strong. As noted from the effect of political campaigns in Rivers State, there is a very high correlation between marketing strategy implementation and success of political brand identity. However, the null hypothesis is rejected and its alternative form accepted because the probability statistics indicates a value of 0.000, which is less than 0.05, at the 95% confidence interval for which the calculations were done. Accordingly there is a substantial relationship between marketing strategy implementation and the success of political brand identity for political party/candidate as seen from political campaigns in Rivers State.

This study focused on investigating the relationship between marketing strategy implementation and the success of political branding among the major political parties in Rivers State. The reason being that political parties in Rivers State over the years, have been witnessing a fierce upturn in political campaigns, to win the patronage of the electorates. To guide the study, a conceptual framework was developed showing the predictor and criterion variables with its measures. In addition, specific objectives of the study were stated as well as research questions. Based on the research objectives and questions, null hypotheses were formulated. The intention is to highlight

marketing strategy as a veritable initiative that can successfully drive political branding in Rivers State in order to achieve ultimately sustainable political campaigns.

The first hypothesis depicts that, there is a positive and significant relationship between marketing strategy implementation and success of political brand image as seen from political campaigns in Rivers State. An organization might fabricate an extraordinary standing and increase the value of its contributions by building areas of strength for its brand. A laid out brand with a great brand image can help deals, lower promoting costs, and open up new market possibilities (Putri & Ekawati, 2017). Furthermore, they noted that, entrepreneurs, organizations, political parties and marketing experts ought to focus their endeavors on making a strong brand image as this will strategically market the organization in the light which it requires and increase her market value.

According to Zhang (2015), an enterprise can foster a significant position in the commercial center with the guide of serious areas of strength brand image development. Organizations can cut marketing costs and still extensively market all her products/services more effectively by building strong brand image by means of an efficient marketing strategy. Moreover, a solid brand image can help organizations in enhancing the services and products they furnish and build a better market presence with their clients (Sulistiani, 2013). Thus, this research inferred that marketing strategy implementation brings about a resultant increase in the success of an organizations' political brand image and market presence.

Equally, the second hypothesis portrays a positive and significant relationship between marketing strategy implementation and success of political brand trust as seen from political campaigns in Rivers State. Sohail, Hasan and Sohail (2020) explained that brand trust plays an important in marketing any product/service. They noted that it is the first factor that creates reliability in the heart of the consumer to repeat such product through an imagery value established in the mind of that customer after usage. This implies that for a political brand to be trusted, they must have represented the party brand in a light acceptable to the people, possibly through their campaign promises or a known tract record (Zaif, 2016). The work of Lin and Lee (2012) characterize trust as a positive assumption for the client towards the brand mentally. Consumers of product/services or the electorates see political campaigns or online entertainment as more reliable and a possible picture of what the political party intends to do (Foux, 2006). This may be credited to the way that the political campaigns give intelligent correspondences and as such create more trust-goal content in the mind of the people (Tatar & Eren-Erdogmus, 2016). Therefore, this research infers that marketing strategy implementation promotes and give presence to the success of political brand image in the eyes of the electorate to align with their preferred political party or candidates.

Besides, there is a positive and significant relationship between marketing strategies implementation and success of political brand identity as seen from political campaigns in Rivers State. Putri and Ekawati (2017) noted that brand identity is a major determinant that aids choice making for any product or service rendered. Tatar and Eren-Erdogmus (2016) argued that brand

identity contributes to the building of the image of the brand and increases the trust in which consumers have on the product/service. Furthermore, they established that brand identity creates product/service awareness, which makes any marketing strategy easier to implement. Wasil (2017) proposed that brand identity is an important factor that determines the market positioning of the brand or the organization.

Organizations can cut marketing costs and still extensively market all her products/services more effectively by building strong brand identity (Sulistiani, 2013). Furthering this stance, Sohail, Hasan and Sohail (2020) averred that a solid brand identity can help organizations in enhancing the services and products they furnish and in building a better market presence and position. Thus, this research inferred that marketing strategy implementation brings about a resultant increase in the success of political brand identity in an organization and generates market presence.

V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The present study aimed to establish an empirical relationship between the marketing strategy implementation and the metrics of political branding (political brand image, political brand trust, and political brand identity) as evidenced from political campaigns in Rivers State. Following the findings, it is affirmed that marketing strategy implementation substantially contributes to strategically marketing and positioning political parties and her candidates. This position also builds on the observed correlation between marketing strategy implementation and the metrics of political branding, and the various highpoints were reached;

- i. Marketing strategy contributes to strategically marketing political brand image for political party/candidate
- ii. Marketing strategy is one of the major concepts that correlates to Political brand trust
- iii. Marketing strategy relates to strategically marketing political brand identity for political party and its candidates.

The study therefore concludes that marketing strategy implementation positively and significantly correlates with the success of political branding in Rivers State, and recommends that, Leaders of political parties should embark on effective marketing strategy implementation to substantially correlate the success of political branding of their candidates and build and display the image, trust and identity of their parties that will usher in effective representation, adoption of corporate citizenship behavior and adherence to honesty and justice that ought to be evidenced in delivering their campaign promises to the electorates and hence build trust in their party over time.

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