The Imperative of Personality Audit, Image Audit, and Opinion Poll in Political Public Relations (PPR) Practices

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Abstract
Given the eclectic and interdisciplinary nature of political public relations, the study focused on the essence of personality and image audits, and opinion poll in promoting or selling an electoral candidate to target voters. Using a survey research method, a sample of 486 public relations practitioners who are experts in marketing politics were used to assess the situation. Empirical findings were made. First, the study revalidates the notion that modern political public relations (PPR) practices anchor on research. Also a tight intellectual excursion into the domain of the three research techniques adds credence to this empirical finding. Secondly, political profile of an electoral candidate influences political judgments and voting decisions of the electorates. Thirdly, failure to conduct or lack of image and/or personality audit of an electoral candidate translates to minimal or no support to candidates and voters switching of loyalty to opponents. Opinion poll acts as a pendulum that directs the course of action to be taken by electioneering campaign planners in conceptualizing and designing appropriate communication campaign strategies. Other findings and recommendation were also made. It concludes that employing the dark arts of Machiavellian political chicanery in marketing election candidates is not a substitute to personality and image audits, and opinion poll, rather the emerging political order of 'politics unusual' in Nigeria and other third world nations demands research, which reveals the content of characters of politicians.
Keywords: Personality audit, Image audit, Opinion poll, Political public relations, Marketing politics

Introduction

In the contemporary political process, public relations cum reputation management has been identified as a strong link between a better informed and enlightened society and those who hold or are aspiring to hold power in trust for the masses. As a specialized function of public relations, PPR is concerned with creating and sustaining mutual understanding between political actors and the masses so that there will be enthronement of democratic order, rule of law, and respect for constituted authority. Its main function is to build credibility in the political system; build bridges of mutual understanding between governments, party, political leader and the voters.

In carrying out these and other functions, PPR draws and applies strategies from other related disciplines. One of such disciplines is marketing. In this study, emphasis is laid on candidate marketing. Marketing when used in the popular parlance does not give an all – encompassing description of the concept as used in the contemporary politics of advanced democracies. Marketing politics is much more than winning elections at all cost or crafting alluring words, symbols and arguments in an attempt to move public opinion to support self interest and policies Given the context of the study, we can view it as a multi–layered, interdisciplinary organized marketing campaign effort aimed at identifying the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of a subject (candidate, political leaders ,etc.) or object for the purposes of securing support during mass mobilization events or campaigns (e.g. elections, political rallies, advocacy meetings). PPR adopts marketing strategies to market political or an election aspirant/candidate (Achor, 2002).

Now, what is candidate marketing as used in PPR? A lot of explanations have been offered by scholars; we are not concerned with those explanations here rather we adopt an operational definition. Candidate marketing is a specialized aspect of marketing politics which aims at promoting, selling or marketing a political candidate or aspirant through the integration of marketing and public relations strategies, etc, (Achor 2007; 2011). It can further be seen as marketing good qualities of a candidate through personality profiling, image/reputation research and management, opinion audit and personality packaging, etc. in order to secure the support of party members or the electorate before, during and after elections or any political mobilization campaign. Those who engage in the candidate marketing aim at securing the endorsement of the aspirant/candidate either at the party or society level.

Experience and observation have shown that in the old order of Nigerian politics, securing the candidacy of candidate or aspirant is usually done through the exchange of money or by employing the dark arts of Machiavellian political chicanery (i.e. doing anything negatively possible to dislodge political opponent, etc). All these and more are what PPR through the adoption of personality audit, image audit, and opinion poll tends to demarket by presenting and adopting ethically – oriented approaches. Money is necessary in every political outing but guarantees nothing in the emerging political order, where Nigerians are beginning to ask critical questions concerning their political rights and yearning for a paradigm shift from 'politics as usual' to 'politics

unusual'. For the new desired political order to emerge, a candidate must have offerings that must appeal to majority of target voters. Being a money bag is not a guarantee that a candidate wins elections or garners support of his party members or the electorate. It is much more than that. A candidate cannot out – spend or out – market his way to greatness if his core offering does not grab the attention of the market place (target audience, voters, etc.), (Achor, 2007). Based on these scenarios or descriptions, a candidate needs to re-assess himself through personality / image audits and opinion poll.

Unfortunately, observation has shown that majority of election candidates in the third world democracies including Nigeria ignore these important research techniques/principles prior to their electioneering campaigns or the elections proper. The multiplier effects of this failure to adopt those research techniques come in different folds; namely poor voting decisions and political judgment by the target voters, lack of or insufficient support and switching of loyalty by target voters, and poor planning and implementation of campaigns.

Based on this background information, the broad purpose of this study is to discover the influence of the research techniques (personality audit, image audit, and opinion poll) on political public relations practices and the political system. To achieve this broad objective, the researchers were guided by the following research questions. Does personality profile of an election candidate influence political judgments/voting decisions of the electorate? Does lack of image audit of political candidates in advance democracies lead to non or insufficient support and switching of loyalty by target voter? Can opinion poll act as a pendulum that directs the course of action to be taken in planning and implementing campaign strategies?

Theoretical Review: A conceptual clarifications
Given the interdisciplinary and eclectic nature of modern public relations practice, it is expedient to clarify some key concepts that will give the desired sense of direction to the study. However, the discourse is being guided by the "short gun explanation approach", which targets on a single issue or related issues/phenomena. This explanation paradigm is adopted because of its utilitarian value in making reviews or discusses illustratively and comprehensibly. Personality audit, image audit, and opinion poll are related, strategic and potent research methodologies or techniques that have for decades been used by psychologists and other allied practitioners in conducting behavioural studies. These research techniques too, have enjoyed wider applications and replicated in varying contexts in modern Political Public Relations (PPR) practices. According to Centre for Political Consulting, United Kingdom (2009), the practice of political public relations demands series of researches aimed at identifying certain cognitive factors that may influence political campaigns.

Earlier in his moderate expose on political marketing, Achor (2002; 2007) explored the relevance of research in politics. He posits that any marketing effort to sell the politician to the voter should involve motivational or bahavioural research. This research reveals the expectations of voters from a particular politician, political party in power, or party candidate that is aspiring to hold public office. Furthermore, the voters' demographics and psychographics need to be identified for proper electioneering campaign, voter education, mobilization, and voter segmentation or delineation (Achor, 2002).

These concepts (personality and image audits and opinion poll) share some basic commonalities in their applications as research techniques in political public relations practices. But etymologically, they denote different meanings and share close affinity largely due to their interdisciplinary roots or origins and usage. Bulent (2011) described Personality Audit (PA) as a quantitative personality assessment tool that gives a deeper understanding of one and how an individual interact with others. Though, this assessment tool enjoys interdisciplinary applications, Bulent (2011) further asserts that, "it was developed to clarify executives' various motivational needs. Using a psychodynamic approach to leadership, the personality audit allows you to assess yourself in seven personality dimensions and to identify personal blind spots". The resulting insights can be used to formulate appropriate leadership development goals. The seven personality dimensions presented in polarities by Bulent are self concept or self perception, behavioural patterns, or credibility, social interaction/interpersonal communication, relationship skills, and leadership skills/competencies, etc. Extensive review of these personality pointers reveals that volumes have been written on them by personality exponents of the twenty century as documented in the studies of Josephs, Robert, Hazel, Markus and Roman (1992); Schwalbe, Michael staples and Clifford (1991); James (1998) and Maslow (1970).

For better sequence of thought or understanding, a few of the personality dimensions are tangentially discussed. James (1988) espoused the concept of self as an important index in a personality assessment exercise. Self concept is formed through: self appraisals, reactions and responses from others and social comparisons. Judgments about oneself constitute self appraisals and often times anchor on individual experiences. Hence, the greater the number of positive experiences an individual has, the more positive his self-concept and vice-versa (Ndolo, 2001).

Another personality dimension, which the public relations or the political campaign expert must look-out for when conducting personality audit for an election candidate is credibility. Credibility is an important index that tells a lot about an individual especially if he intends to occupy or gunning for an elective position. It is also an important factor in image/reputation studies. Depending on which scholar one reads, credibility can be described

as consisting of competence, dynamism, trustworthiness, charisma, and ethics, to mention a few (Hybels and Weaver 11, 1998).In his Rhetoric, Aristotle identified three components that make up credibility: good character, goodwill and good sense (sagacity). This is also referred to as the '3G of positive personality indices'. The model adopted by Strong and Cook (1987), described credibility as having at least five dimensions; namely competence, character, composure, sociability and extroversion. Competence here denotes the degree for which an election candidate is perceived to be an expert on a particular issue or knowledgeable of the office or position he is gunning for. Character as used here denotes the degree to which an election candidate or person is perceived as a reliable, essentially good and trustworthy. Also, composure explains the degree to which a person is perceived as being able to maintain control over emotions and certain critical issues of public importance.

Lastly, extroversion determines the degree to which the election candidate is perceived as bold, outgoing and dynamic (Strong and Cook, 1987, with emphasis by the authors). A personality traits survey of an election candidate must reveal the latent leadership skills of the candidate, his strength weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT). The traits inferences that we make about other people are encapsulated into two important dimensions:

(i)   We tend to evaluate others in terms of their task-related qualities or intellectual competence;
(ii)   We tend to evaluate others in terms of their interpersonal or social qualities.

The personality audit must also identify the interpersonal communication and relationship skills, relevant leadership behaviours, and goal achievement propensity of the candidate.

Another term that needs conceptual explanation is image audit. Image audit apparently relates to personality audit but focuses on a variety of human indices or factors. It drives from the concept of image and reputation management in modern public relations practice. Volumes have been written on both concepts as documented in the studies of Egwu (2007); Uduji (2007); Odigbo (2007); Nwosu (1996); Nwosu (2007) and Achor (2002). Image refers to the impression or perception target publics have on an individual or object. From this view point the totality of what an individual does; his behaviour, attitude, achievement or non achievement, educational status, etc. defines or conjures a spiral of images on the minds of people. Of the spiral images, corporate image is contextually relevant in our discussion. This is because corporate image is a strategic asset that creates competitive advantages and favourable climate for the survival and development of an organization or individual (Ingrida and Petra, 2006). According to Nwosu (1996) corporate image refers to the overall reputation of an organization or individual as determined by the various pictures, impression, knowledge, information and perceptions that the public of that organization or individual have at it. Research and experience have shown that this type of image can be negative or positive, favourable or unfavourable (Ingrida and Petra, 2006).

For escaping negative consequences of uncontrolled images and shooting up opportunities of positive image, systematic measuring of candidate image is necessary, particularly in the context of electioneering campaign or marketing an election candidate to the electorate. Anchoring on the above submissions, corporate image, audit entails carrying out a survey on the overall image components of a person or organization. According to Kuhne, Schemer, Matthes and Wirth (2010), Image audit is the study of *'hidden perception'*. Every human being has some hidden perception, which normally is not revealed; it is only when we probe into these hidden perceptions that we get to know our true image because self-perception does not objectively reveal or explain corporate image Within the context of this discourse, image audit may focus on the personality make-ups, behavioural patterns, character, leadership skills, interpersonal communication skills, etc. of an election candidate or political office holder. It may also probe on how well known; renowned, respectable a public or aspiring political office holder is among its target publics. The overall purpose is to determine the person's reputation profile. The reputation profile or indices may include a good image, character, identity, a good name, respectability; honour, superiority, majesty and grandeur (Egwu, 2007). An election candidate of repute has worth and a name to protect and its target voters are proud to associate and identify with him or his electioneering bid. The findings of an image survey helps the public relations practitioners craft advertising messages and other persuasive behaviour change communication messages capable of reinforcing or altering existing perceptions of target audience have on the election.

Having discussed the other research forms, our main preoccupation now is to conceptualize opinion poll. A wide range of explanations have been offered on the concept of opinion poll by many scholars. One common thing in those explanations is that those scholars are consensual in recognizing the concept as a research technique aimed at unearthing certain phenomena. Albert (1991) described an opinion poll as a survey of public opinion from a particular sample. "Opinion polls are usually designed to represent the opinions of a population by conducting a series of questions and then extrapolating generalities in ratio or within confidence intervals". It has also been described as marketing research technique applied to canvassing public opinion on specific political, social or other issues. Frequently used in forecasting election results, opinion pollsters take survey of the views of randomly chosen samples of the population and draw statistical results.

As a working definition, this study adopts the definition offered by the Oxford Dictionary of Politics. It describes opinion polls as surveys designed to discover the attitudes and /or intended or recalled behaviour of political actors; these may be leaders', legislators, bureaucrats, or electors. Such polls may be conducted by a variety of

means, including telephoning and face-to-face interviewing, and are of two main types. The first, the random poll entails selection on the basis that each member of the target population has a known probability of being chosen. This method yields statistics with a sampling distribution which is approximately normal, and the range of error can be quantified. The second is the quota poll, whereby an attempt is made to replicate the social distribution of the population among the sample on the assumption that, if it is representative socially, it will be similarly representative in its political views. Both types of poll are used by market research firms to assess public opinion, especially during election campaigns when they are used both to inform the strategies of the competing parties and attempt made to try and predict the outcome (Albert, 1991; Bradburn and Sudman, 1988).

Empirical Review

Literature is replete with practical roots, origins and early adoptions of opinion polls. The advance democracies such as the United States of America and Britain have for long adopted opinion polling both in social and political contexts (Asher, 1998; Bradburns and Sudman 1998; Cantril 1989; Converse 1987; Hitchen 2009; Walden 1990; Lavrakas as et al 1995). Buttressing further on the origins of opinion polls, Asher (1998) asserted that, "although the systematic collection of information about society and social issues can be traced to eighteenth-century in the United States, but it was only in the mid twentieth century that opinion poll became the subject of empirical study".

Having traced the roots and early applications of opinion polls, it is now imperative to document some of the empirical studies on political opinion polling. Literature search on this aspect is quite revealing as studies by Mutz (2005); Cohen, Tsfati and Sheater 2008); Kuhne, Schemer, Mattes and Wirth (2009); Shamuir and Shikaki; Ross (2010); Michael (2005); Griffin and Flavin (2011), Anderson and Singer (2006); Rigby and Springer (2010) reflected on a wider range of issues bordering on politics, media and voters.

A brief discourse on the purpose and findings of these surveys are offered here as further platforms on which the findings of this study stand. Exploring the role of perceptions of the opinion of others as they relate to the formation of public opinion, Mutz (2005) developed two interrelated theories: the third person effect and the spiral of silence. These were tested in the context of public opinion regarding divestment of financial interest in South Africa. As hypothesized by the third person effect, perceptions of the influences of media reports on others were found to be consistently greater than perceptions of influence on self. Findings were strongly supportive of this component of the "third person" effect hypothesis. Perceptions of the opinion of others were also explored in relation to respondents' willingness to express their opinion publicly. As suggested by the 'spiral of silence theory', respondents were found to be more willing to express their opinions publicly when they perceived a trend in support of their view point, or when there was a greater perceived likelihood of achieving success for their issue position. According to Mutz (2005), "the size of the effect produced from joining these two processes is moderated by the role of issue salience". He concluded that people perceiving divestment as a highly important issue are more likely to ascribe greater media influence to others than to themselves, but their unwillingness to express their opinions publicly is least likely to be influenced by perceptions of the climate of opinion.

Cohen, Tasfati and Sheafer (2011), postulate that much of what politicians do is driven by their belief in the power of media, which motivates their desire to be featured in news coverage. They based their argument on recent advances in communication. Their belief in these advances in communication theory has contributed to our understanding of the *Mediatization* of politics. From their structural equation modeling, it was revealed "the politicians" belief in the power of media increases their motivation and effort to appear in media coverage, which in turn is related both to greater media prominence and to more parliamentary activity. The issue of campaign priming is reechoed in the study of Kuhne and associates (2009). In that study, they investigated the impact of campaign induced emotions on opinion formation. They argued that emotions may activate cognitive content which may in turn influence political judgments. However their analyses support hypothesis that political campaigns may influence opinion not only through cognitive priming but also through affective priming. In their study of how citizens and their legislators prioritize spheres of representation, Griffin and Flavin (2011) uncovers evidence that citizens' priorities about various spheres of legislative representation differ across demographic groups and that these differences are subsequently rejected in the in-office behaviour of their elected officials. More importantly, the study revealed that citizens with higher incomes place a higher priority on policy representation and less on constituency services than do those with lower incomes. Anderson and Singer (2006) also conducted research on multi level models and the politics of inequality across Europe. Using surveys conducted in 20 European democracies, Anderson and Singer (2006) examined the effect of income inequality on people's attitudes about the functioning of the political system and trust in public institutions. They find that citizens in countries with higher levels of income inequality on attitudes toward the political system are particularly powerful among individuals on the political left. In contrast, inequality's negative effect on people's faith in the system is muted among those on the right. Ross (2010) explored the ways politicians characterize and think about the relationship they sustain with journalist. He used a case study approach that focuses on the views and attitudes of New Zealand MPs towards members of the press gallery, to a lesser extent their local and

regional news media. The broad findings suggest that MPs are relatively sanguine about their media relationships, recognizing their symbiotic nature, but clear differences emerged in terms of complexity and friendliness of these relationships.

Methodology

Given the nature of the study, survey research was adopted. This method was chosen because it gives the researcher the latitude of focus attention on representative samples drawn from the entire population. It works on the premise that a given population is too large for any researcher to realistically observe all the elements in the population (Nwodu, 2006). The population of the study comprises public relations practitioners with practical experience spanning over 10 years and above but work in PR consulting firms. Samples studied where drawn from Public Relations Practitioners who are vast in political consulting and image studies through purposive sampling techniques. The samples were divided into two: Samples drawn from advanced democracies via the use of social media (Facebook, and twitter yahoo chatting platform, etc.) and those drawn from Nigeria through access to the register of membership into Nigerian Institute of Public Relations (NIPR). The choice of purposive sampling method was to ensure that only PR practitioners that ply their trade in consultancies were chosen. It is believed that their experiences in political consulting and image studies will come to bare on the study. A total of 500 PR practitioners were chosen by assigning quota thus: Practitioners from advance democracies – 300, Practitioners from Nigeria – 200.

A 16- item questionnaire was structured; it contains questions aimed at obtaining information about respondent's demography and their responses to the research question. Two methods of distributing/administering the questionnaire were adopted: First, copies of the questionnaire were e-mailed to email boxes of the respondents drawn from advanced democracies which they completed and sent back to the researchers electronically. Before the emailing of the questionnaire, the researchers had already established strong relationship with the respondents through constant interaction via the social media (face book, twitter and yahoo messenger).The second method used was face-to-face contact, whereby the respondents completed the questionnaires and returned same to either the researchers or their assistants. These categories of respondents are basically PR practitioners resident in any of the six geo-political zones in Nigeria. Descriptive statistics method such as frequency tables and percentage were used in the data analysis.

Presentation of Findings

500 copies of questionnaire were distributed out of which 492 (representing 98.4% response rate) were filled and returned while 8 copies (representing 1.6%) were not returned. However, 6 out of the 492 copies of questionnaire filled and returned were not properly filled hence the researchers discarded them. Based on this development, the analysis was based on the 486 copies of questionnaire that were found usable. The high response rate recorded may be attributed to the method of questionnaire distribution and collection. However, analysis of demographic data collected and collated showed that 170 (56.6%) out of 300 respondents sampled overseas, are from the United States, 100 (33.3%) respondents ply their in Europe while the remaining 30(10%) respondents came from Southern America and out of the 186 sampled from Nigeria, 62(33.3%) practise in the South West region particularly Lagos, 40 (21. 5%) respondents ply their trade in the South-East, 30 (16.1%) came from South-South, 20 (10.7%) respondents ply their trade in the North Central region, 20 (10.7%) also practice in the North West, while 14(7.5%) practice in the North East geopolitical zone. Also, of the 486 respondents, 263(54.1%) have practised political public relations for over 18 years, while 223 respondents representing 45.8% have practiced PPR for over 12 years. Other results from the analyzed research data are shown in tables 1 to 6.

Table 1:   Respondents knowledge/practicing of personality audit, image audit, and opinion polls

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	486	100
No	-	-
Total	**486**	**100**

Source: Field survey May – September, 2011

Table 1 indicated that all the 486 (100%) respondents are knowledgeable of personality and image audits and opinion polls. They have also conducted these researches for their clients.

Table 2: Personality and image audits necessity for candidate before an election?

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	402	82.7
No	-	-
Can't say	84	17.3
Total	**486**	**100**

Source: Field survey May – September 2011

Table 2 captures the responses of respondent on the usefulness of conducting personality and image audits prior

to elections. The data in the table indicate that majority of the respondents (402) repressing 82.7% answered in the affirmative that personality and image audits of candidate is necessary before an election. 84 respondents accounting for 17.3% were neither here nor there.

Table 3: Influence of candidate's personality profile on electorate's political behaviour

Options	Frequency	Percentage
Influences the electorate's political judgments		
Influences voting decisions of target voters	-	-
All the options above	486	100
Total	**486**	**100**

Source: Field Survey, May – September, 2011

In table 3 all the respondents answered in the affirmative that personality profile of an election candidate influences the electorate's political judgment and their voting decisions.

Table 4: Effect of lack of image audit on voter's political behaviour

Options	Frequency	Percentage
(i) Non/insufficient voter support to the candidate	84	17.3
(ii) Switching of loyalty by target voters to candidate's opponent.	-	-
(iii) All of the options	402	82.7
(iv) Non of the options	-	-
Total	**486**	**100**

Source: Field Survey, May – September, 2011

Table 4 captures the effect of lack of image audit of a candidates on voters' political behaviours, it can be deduced from the table that 84 (17.3%) of the respondents indicated that there could be non or insufficient voter support to the election candidate due to lack of image audit. 404 respondents accounting for 82.7% believe that lack of image audit of an election candidate result to non / insufficient voter support to the candidate's and also switching of loyalty by target voters to candidate opponent.

Table 5: Benefits of opinion polling on target audience of an election candidate

Options	Frequency	Percentage
(i) Helps to assess and determine the strength, weaknesses, opportunities and threat of an election candidate.	86	17.69
(ii) Determine the popularity/credibility ratings of candidates among target audiences/voters	52	10.7
(iii) Ascertain the views of target audience on the suitability or otherwise of a candidate	36	7.407
(iv) All of the options above	312	64.19
(v) None of the options	-	-
Total	**486**	**100**

Source: Field Survey. May – September, 2011

Table 5 reveals the benefit of opinion poll on target audiences of an election candidate. The table tells us that majority of the respondents (312 or 64.2%) believe that all the options in the table are benefits of opinion polling. They include: helps to assess and determine the SWOT of an election candidate; determines the popularity / credibility rating of a candidate among target audiences (or voters) and; ascertainment of target audience's views on the suitability or otherwise of an election candidate. However, only 86 (17.7%) respondents believe that option (i) is the benefit of opinion poll, 52 or 10.7% believes in option II while 36 or representing 7.4% ticked the third option. No respondents declined comment.

Table 6: Opinion poll determine course of action to be taken in campaign planning and execution

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	368	75.7
No	84	17.3
No opinion	34	7.0
Total	**486**	**100**

Source: Field Survey, May – September, 2011

From table 6 above, 368 (75.7%) respondents answered in the positive that opinion poll determines the course of action to be taken in campaign planning and execution. 84 respondents representing 17.3% answered in the negative while the remainder of 34 or 7.0% respondents were neither here nor there.

Discussion of Findings

The result of the study is quite revealing. Summary of the result showed that:

(i) In political public relations (PPR) practice, personality and image audits of an election candidate are very necessary prior to elections. This finding anchor on the premise that without research being conducted in political campaigns, candidates stand to spend more resources chasing wrong targets and programmes.

(ii) Personality profile of an election candidate influences political judgment (voting decision of the electorate). This influence may be positive or negative depending on the content of the personality profile.

(iii) Failure to conduct or lack of image audit of an election candidate translates to minimal or no support to the candidate and switching of voters' loyalty to opponents. This finding supports Kotler (1996), switching of loyalty spiral in modern politics. Target voters can only vote for candidates they know their antecedents.

(iv) Opinion poll helps to assess or determine the strengths, weaknesses; opportunities and threats (SWOT) of an election candidate. Its importance also lies on determination of the popularity / credibility ratings of candidate amongst target audiences.

(v) Opinion poll acts as a pendulum that directs the course of action to be taken by electioneering campaign planners in conceptualizing and designing appropriate communication campaign strategies.

(vi) Results of personality / image audits and opinion poll direct individuals response to the three cognitive compartments of latitudes of acceptance, rejection and non – commitment. They also reveal the views of target audiences on the suitability or otherwise of an election candidate or political aspirant.

Conclusion

The study has revalidated the notion that modern public relations practice anchor on research. The era of 'hit–and–miss approach' has gone and gradually being replaced by planned and systematic approach. It is quite revealing that from the result of the study, PPR is voter – oriented or voter– driven. Given the fact that more and more people are becoming conversant with their political and other rights, election candidates and of course political office holders are being careful on the way they solicit voters' support. Image is such an important factor that modern politicians should not gamble with. No amount of money spent can launder a battered image, so politicians especially in advance democracies start early enough to do personality audit of themselves. Political public relations therefore need pro activeness so that those early warning signs that impinge upon a candidate's political outing are identified and addressed. Political aspirants or candidates do not live in the moon; they live in the same environment with the electorate, so the electorate uses the attitudes and behaviour of the candidates to assess their suitability or otherwise for the office they are gunning for.

The image/personality profile of political candidate or public office holder nonetheless, is a function of the acceptability and marketability of its candidature. However, it must be said here that the credibility or image/reputation ratings of an election candidate significantly affects its triumph or failure in the election. Though, in some third world democracies, confirmed thieves, 419ners, dim-witted individuals, etc. win elections through cutting corners. Let the content of the characters of our leaders and politicians vouch for them rather than engaging into *'politics as usual'*, which is characterized by money politics, election fixing or rigging and intimidation. These are features of the dark arts of Machiavellian political chicanery and cannot be a substitute to personality/image audits and opinion poll in the emerging political order of 'politics unusual'. In summary, Nigerian politicians should embrace the principles of public relations, which aim at building credibility in the body politics; building bridges of mutual understanding between government / political leader and the electorate. Against this backdrop, PPR is concerned with the result – oriented management of images, reputations, attitudes, crises that impinge upon the enthronement, existence, preservation, sustenance, development or growth of government, constituted political principles, democratic orders and the rule of law. Hence, any act by a politician or election candidate that fall short of the standards of PPR is negative politicking and should be avoided in order to earn the support and loyalty of the electorate.

Based on the above submissions, the following is recommended

(i) Individuals wishing to contest political offices should start early enough to build a better image and reputation. This is because the 'politics as usual' is gradually giving way for 'politics unusual' where games of politics must be played according to the rules.

(ii) Personality and image audit must be employed to ascertain the fate of an election candidate in the new scheme of politicking and global best practices.

(iii) Behaviour change communication strategies should precede electioneering campaign and continues after elections.

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