**POLITICAL PUBLIC RELATIONS, E-GOVERNANCE AND VOTER PARTICIPATION IN NIGERIA**

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**ABSTRACT**

*This study examines the state of political public relations in Nigeria by focusing on E-governance, and voter participation in Nigeria electoral system. Its argument are based on the theoretical literature review on political public relations , campaigns , and the competitive advantages of spokes persons of political parties and what they stand for. The nature of the analysis is exploratory rather than definitive, and specific investigations are needed to thoroughly explore and better theorize political image, campaign and competitive advantage in various political domains. The study also observed that deploying e-governance as political public relations strategy is not as easy as it seems especially in a country that is continually deficient in infrastructures. Also, factors responsible for low voter turnout were; inadequate voter and civic education, ineffective voter mobilization, the fear of violence during elections, unfulfilled promises by elected officials and low public trust in state institutions. It was similarly reviewed that political parties do not engage political public relations meaningfully therefore leading to ineffectiveness, while, political parties’ campaign lacks ideology and political will and the public were fed with propaganda…*

**Keywords: E-Governance, Political Public Relations, E-governance, Voter participation.**

**Introduction**

The twentieth century witnessed the birth and rapid growth of a new profession, devoted to the effective communication of political messages, today, (the twenty first century), members of this profession stand between the politicians and the media, profiting from the relationship of mutual interdependence which exists between the two. It is called political public relations. As a concept, it refers to deliberately organized activities of political parties, politicians, political actors and institutions of government aimed at creating and sustaining mutual line of understanding between political entities and the citizenry for the purpose of attaining set goals. Just like public relations which is the base, political public relations involves strategic counseling and provision of early warning signals on potential danger to the clearly defined goals of the institutions associated with politics.

Corporate public relations, from which the professional political communication emerged, first developed in the US at the turn of the century, as big US companies encountered for the first time the often conflicting demands of commercial success and public opinion. In a political environment of expanding suffrage and public scrutiny of corporate activity, politicians quickly embraced the principles and methods of corporate public relations; and seized the platform to launch a machinery to protect and sustain their objectives (Belch, and Belch, 2003).

However, just as it is with all political issues, political public relations have its own snags: people are not disposed to readily attune to whatever comes from politicians without proper scrutiny. So even the “free” media platform upon which a carefully choreographed PR message rests is in certain situation considered not good enough. Therefore, government which is an offshoot of political affiliation has to seek a more cogent, modern and advanced means of engaging the citizenry in mutual contact. This coincides with the rise of the online media anchored on the strength of the Internet. Out of these emerged the concept of e-governance, which is today poised to provide a more balanced and symmetric line of relationship between government and the governed; and to a large extent separate government actions and directions from the overtly political issues. E-governance therefore, has the potential to strike the needed right cord between the policy makers and the citizenry (Ahlers, 2006).

E-governance has become a major role in democratic governance today, where political leaders have involved citizens in governing them through the internet based technology. (Manoharan, Aroon P.; Melitski, James; Holzer, Marc (20 January 2022). It is somewhat clear also that some issues concerning e-government are that there exists a digital divide and digital inequalities that bar certain people from accessing the full benefits of digitization. This also means that when presented as the only option to access an essential service, those who do not have public access to computers and the internet, or do not have adequate knowledge on how to use them, suffer a lot and this is very common with people in the rural areas who form the majority of the voting strength of this country. Similarly, these issues may also include the reliability of information on the web and issues that could influence and bias public opinions. There are many considerations and potential implications of implementing and designing e-government, including disintermediation of the government and its citizens, digital self determination of citizens in a global internet network, impacts on economic, social, and political factors, vulnerability to cyber attacks,, and disturbances to the status quo in these areas (Collodi, Jason, 2016). It will be good to note that voter participation is also vital in the influence of e governance and in the situation when e governance is not properly utilized by politicians to affect the voter, what then becomes of the voting turnout or participation in a country where democracy has come to stay and must be sustained are some of the issues that the study intends to discuss in this paper. The study will also briefly look at some issues patterning political public relations as they relate to spokes persons intentions of going about their campaigns and image building of their candidates as well as the voter participation and education in the political realm of Nigeria.

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

Electronic governance or e-governance is the application of information technology for delivering government services, exchange of information, communication transactions, and integration of various stand-alone systems between government to citizen (G2C), government-to-business (G2B), government-to-government (G2G), government-to-employees (G2E) as well as back office processes and interactions within the entire governance framework (Saugata, and Masud, 2007). Through e-governance, government services are made available to citizens through IT. The three main target groups that can be distinguished in governance concepts are government, citizens, and businesses/interest groups. Although the two terms are often used interchangeably, there is a difference between e-governance and e-government. E-government refers to the use of the ICTs in public administration which, when combined with organizational change and new skills, are intended to improve public services and democratic processes and to strengthen support to the public.

However, e-government has no provision for governance of ICTs. The governance of ICTs typically requires a substantial increase in regulation and policy making capabilities, as well as additional expertise and opinion-shaping processes among various social stakeholders. The perspective of e-governance is "the use of the technologies that both help to govern and have to be governed" (Rossel, Pierre, and Matthias Finger, 2007). The central goal of e-governance is to reach the beneficiary and to ensure that their service needs are met. Ideally, the government will automatically recognize the importance of achieving this goal in order to maximize its efficiency.

Furthermore, e-government uses one-way communication protocol whereas e-governance uses two-way communication protocol. Establishing the identity of the end beneficiary is a challenge in all citizen-centric services. Statistical information published by governments and global bodies do not always reveal the facts. The intention of e-governance is to down on the unwanted interference of too many layers while delivering governmental services. It depends on good infrastructural setup with the support of local processes and parameters for governments to reach their citizens or end beneficiaries (Akoh, and Jagun, 2012).

**Political Public Relations**

Political public relations are the most potent means of correcting the many defects of advertising as political communication. As a form of political communication, advertising has over the years been seen through the prejudiced lenses of ‘propaganda’ (that is the negative sense of that term). Needless to stress that it is seen as ‘biased’ and partial. Regardless of whether or not the audience agrees or disagrees with the message being advertised, he or she is aware that it isa politically loaded message, reflecting the interests, ideas and values of the sponsor (Arens, Weigold, and Arens, 2011). For this reason, the effectiveness of political advertising as a means of persuasion will always be limited. Knowing that a message has such influence places the reader, viewer or listener in a position to resist and reject it.

Although this has not prevented political advertising from playing an increasingly important part in the political process, it has encouraged the view that other forms of communication may be more effective in transmitting the desired messages. In particular, political actors have come to believe in the importance of ‘free media’ in achieving their goals, as opposed to the paid-for variety. By ‘free media’ it is meant those spaces and outlets in which political actors may gain exposure and coverage, without having to pay media organizations for the privilege.

However, gaining access to free media is not without costs. It requires a more or less professional apparatus of public relations advisers, which must be paid for by the political organization concerned. Constructing or manufacturing the events and contexts through which politicians can acquire free media access may be expensive in money and time. Nevertheless, the term ‘free media’ is used here to distinguish those practices which fall under the broad headings of ‘political marketing’ and ‘public relations’ from those of advertising (Asemah and Edegoh, 2012). Politicians like free media because, unlike advertising, their role in it is not that of authorship. When a politician is reported on the news, editorial responsibility for the selection of ‘sound bites’ broadcast and the interpretation placed upon them, is seen to belong to the journalist. The messages emanating from such publicity are more seen as ‘less manufactured’ than advertisements and, as such, may be thought to carry more legitimacy and credibility. Even if such a conversation is lighthearted and avoids politics entirely, the audience may still feel that a ‘truer’ picture of the politician emerges (Althaus, and Tewksbury, 2000, Broom, and Dozier, 1990).

The lack of control and apparent spontaneity of most free-media scenarios heightens ‘believability’. Although having such out of the control of the politician may appear to be a double-edged sword (the scope for mistakes from the politician’s perspective is clear), the advantage of free media exposure for politicians is founded on the awareness of the audience that such appearances are ‘live’, or if not live in the technical sense, something more than a manufactured political advertisement. And the audience knows this because politicians frequently slip up, or encounter hostile opposition and criticism when they enter the free media arena (Audu, 2011).

For instance what the then British Prime Minister Godon Brown thought was as off the cuff “bigoted” jibe directed at a voter who criticized him (In the UK election campaign of 2010 then Prime Minister Gordon Brown visited the English town of Rochdale to ‘meet and greet’ with voters in a routine photo opportunity. One such voter, Gillian Duffy, criticized Brown to his face, on camera, and was rewarded with a standard politician’s response – polite but rather empty of substance. Back in his ministerial car, he declared to one of his advisors: That was a disaster. You should never have put me with that woman. Whose idea was that? It’s ridiculous.... she was just a sort of bigoted woman who said she used to be Labour. It’s ridiculous. Unfortunately, the microphone he had been wearing on the meet-and-greet operated by Sky News, was still on, and picked up every word of his off-the-cuff remarks. These were then broadcast on Sky News, creating the major PR ‘gaffe’ of the 2010 campaign, for any party. The next few days were spent by Brown in frantic apologies to Mrs Duffy and the nation, to no avail. Labour’s defeat a few days later was attributed by many to this ‘PR disaster’ as much as any question of policy) while campaigning for the 2010 election became a PR disaster that the Prime Minister and his party never recovered from. Brown had underestimated the capacity of free media to bite back.

**Political Public Relations and Nigerian political parties**

The political use of public relations is somewhat amazing in promoting campaigns and image building and management of political parties and candidates in Nigeria. Political parties are rapidly using different mediums to execute their plans in order to win political power. This is currently going on in the 2023 campaigns ahead of February and March elections of President and Governors respectively. The accomplishment of any political party today totally depends upon the way of communication between the political party members and general public. Public Relations is now an important tool for the political organization in order to communicate and share the tasks with both internal and external public. Similarly, the Mass Media has become an important tool for political public relations in Nigeria, they cover the opinion of public which help political parties to make changes to suit their political intentions. It is also not a gain saying that Public Relations also help to receive and record knowledge from public to political organization in Nigeria.

The Public must be informed about what is going on in the government structures, which is the foundation of every democratic society, but at the same time politicians must have an insight into public opinion (Benson-Eluwa,1999). The state must provide society with everything that an individual cannot realize. Media Management and information management are the most crucial activities of the Political Public relations. These activities are connected with the non-ethical communication, which aims on media manipulation and manipulation of the public. Working of Public Relations in modern political parties and government are a mixture of marketing and propaganda. This view of PR activities means that the political actors often want to persuade people in the sense of political ideas and contents by using a one way, manipulative communication process which we are all aware is going on in the political corridors of every state in Nigeria.

Public Relations are of course legitimate activities used for the purpose of explaining official politics to citizens and the political actors in the communication process. Politicians, therefore, while desiring media exposure of the more ‘authentic’ kind permitted by free media opportunities, also strive to re-impose some kind of control over the output. To achieve this requires that politicians employ professional skilled PR people in the workings of the media. This explains why political public relations have remained a potent instrument for the delivery of political message (Bivins, 2014, Castells, 2007). For instance, various political parties in Nigeria popular among them; the Labour party, the Peoples Democratic Party and the All Progressives Congress are campaigning using all forms of political public relations like; (1) news management, (2) agenda building , (3) issues management (4) lobbying, (5) crisis management just to win the support of electorates in Nigeria at various organized political rallies. However, what we experience in Nigeria through political public relations is more of a propaganda tool for spokes persons to dehumanize and destroy their opponents rather than issue based campaigns. This form of political public relations is encapsulated by the likes of Sen. Dino Melaye one of the spoke persons for PDP Presidential, Festus Keyamo, spokesperson for APC presidential candidate, and Kenneth Okonkwo for LP presidential candidates. It has clearly been observed that what they do most of the time is to throw fireworks at each other and peddle propaganda leaving out very important issues in their manifestoes like strategies that can be adopted to pull out Nigeria from the quagmire of economic poverty.

**The Case for E-governance and deployment of political public relations in Nigeria**

Political public relations, no matter how carefully managed, will still be popularly viewed through the lenses of propaganda. While it is always carefully tailored towards managing information regarding politicians, political parties, political issues and governance decisions, its impact is still questioned as it is perceived to have been choreographed to mirror the larger-than-life images of those behind it (Chile and Momoh 2016). To avoid some kind of tainted credibility that such message may carry, politicians in government have found a way of engaging the citizenry through symmetric communication, especially as regards service delivery and policy decisions. One of such means is the use of the electronic channels to have direct contact and explain actions and policies to the citizenry as they unfold. It is called e-governance. According to Hasan (2014), e-governance is the application of information technology in the processes of government functioning to ensure the highest standard of services to the citizens by providing instant access to selected government information, and interfaces for communicating with various government functionaries, wherever and whenever they need it. E-governance may be understood as the performance of the government via the electronic medium in order to facilitate an efficient, speedy and transparent process of disseminating information to the public, and other agencies, and for performing government administrative activities. Since the internet has proved its potential as a powerful and effective means of disseminating information, it is here that the importance of having good government web-enabled interfaces come into light.

**Objectives of E-Governance**

In specific terms, the objectives of e-governance include:

1. Better dissemination of government information at the remotest corner, resulting in better awareness among rural masses about various government schemes and bringing in transparency.
2. Saving in time and cost of people visiting government offices time and again for getting information, lodging complaints and inquiring their status.
3. a platform for people to interact with each other on areas of mutual interest
4. It ensures good governance which is characterized by popular participation, transparency and accountability.
5. It provides possibility of online discussion groups and enhance the rapid development and effectiveness of pressure groups.
6. Provision of better service in terms of time, making governance more effective
7. It lowers the transaction cost and makes government services more accessible.

The entire concept of e-governance has certain fields of implementation which include e-administration, e-services and e-democracy. E-administration refers to improving of government processes and of the internal workings of the public sector with new ICT executed information processes. E-services refers to improved delivery of public services to citizens, while e-democracy implies greater and more active citizen participation and involvement enabled by ICT in the decision making process. There is no denying the fact that the use of internet and related media will be of huge benefits to both the Nigerian government and the citizens. It creates a bond between those at the helm of affairs and those they are supposed to serve. While that line of engagement may be mutually beneficial, it makes the government more accountable and responsible to the people. The evidence of such benefits is reflected in the use of social media by presidential candidates to reach voters in the 2015 presidential elections. At a point, there was a competition between then President Jonathan and then candidate Muhammadu Buhari on who was leading in the Twitter war. Many of their supporters were also engaging in similar scenario in a bid to know which candidate was commanding more positive attention in the cyberspace. The pointer here is that if similar efforts are deployed to issues of governance, it would go a long way in making the citizens actively engaged and contribute constructively to national development. It also has the power of reducing undue criticism of government policies and programmes; and instead generates goodwill for most efforts since it has the input of the people right from the point of conception. However, deploying e-governance as political public relations strategy is not as easy as it seems especially in a country that is continually deficient in infrastructures. Readily coming into mind here is the epileptic issue of power supply. It is not easy to build a cyberspace environment without constant power supply; and even if there is improvement on that front, the country is still far behind in terms of communication technology evolution. In addition, the poor, illiterate and mostly rural populace would find it difficult to participate in the process, except the government provides facilities at that level and with the necessary training required to partake (Chile and Momoh 2016).

**Political Public Relations and Competitive Advantage of Political Parties**

In every country, government officials and civil servants are the most important publics for public relations (Taylor and Kent, 1999). Government and political institutions are not only one of the most important publics for corporation/non – profit public relations, they are also active players and active users of public relations knowledge. They develop their own strategies and tactics to cultivate relationships with various publics and manage communication within and outside their political organizations (Gregory, 2006). The fact that public relations strategies and tactics are commonly used by political parties, institutions, and government bodies have also imbibed the culture of adopting political public relations strategies to conduct businesses that can influence effective business participation (Cutlip, 1976, Lee, 2007). The knowledge of the state and development of political public relations has become imperative to ascertain political party’s image, campaign and competitive advantage attaining any political feat. The increasing international relations of Nigeria with other nation states make Nigeria and its economic and political activities and ideology an interesting case study to investigate the nature of political public relations in Nigeria. This position also suggests that the key to acquiring favourable support, image and reputation is a clear campaign based on issue and ideology through an effective communication channel to the electorate. No political party can ignore political image since every organization has an image and always look forward to sustain the image (Bernstein, 2008). Whether the image is created consciously or unconsciously, it affects the behaviour of the people; hence, knowledge of corporate image helps political parties direct their communication effort in a more efficient way (Bernstein, 2008); corporate image is the eye of the receiver. It is simply the picture that the electorate has of a political party through the accumulation of all received messages, whether good or bad.

In today’s competitive environment, there is a competitive pressure and the desire to be recognized and supported by the people; political parties invest millions in the campaign and ideology in every election period to strengthen their corporate images and reputations led by the best strategic thinking on the matter, political elites select those attributes of the political party that is unique and non- imitable in order to project their image into the hearts and minds of the people for political support (Hatch and Schultz, 2004). It is more difficult to gain a competitive advantage nowadays when political campaign and ideology are becoming more similar in Nigeria. In those circumstances, political parties must show corporate image and reputation (Balmer and Greyser, 2003). But the truth still remains that each of the political party will always want to maintain an image that is not always speaking the truth but an image that is always very comfortable with their intention. These sharp practices and the failure of the Nigerian political class have caused the electorate to develop a negative image of political parties, which in the long run affects the nation’s development.

**Political Campaign management and voter participation in Nigeria**

Literature has documented the efforts of political public relations and advertising in various respects. Brains and Wattenberg (1996 in Nwanmuoh, Emmanuel Ejiofo; Anene, Jane Nwakaego; Obi Okonkwo, Linus Chimagufunam, Okoronkwo, Uchenna Chineneye 2021) suggested that political campaign advertising plays an important role both in voter’s political learning and their evaluations of a candidate based on his learning. Alvarez and Shankster (2006) found that televised campaign ads, including attack ads, could influence candidate evaluations and preferences. Over the years, a tremendous number of studies have focused on assessing the relationships between negative political ads and voter turnout. The findings are inconsistent. Although some studies (e.g. Ansolabehere, Iyengar, & Simon, 1991, Ansolabehere, Iyengar, Simon, & Valentino 1994) found that negative campaign advertising hinders electoral participation, other studies (Finkel & Geer, 1998; Lau, Sigelman, Heldman, & Babbit, 1999) rejected demobilization claims. On the contrary, some studies (Freedman & Goldstein, 1999; Geer & Lau, 2006; Goldstein & Freedman, 2002; Wattenberg & Brians, 1999 in Nwanmuoh, Emmanuel Ejiofo; Anene, Jane Nwakaego; Obi Okonkwo, Linus Chimagufunam, Okoronkwo, Uchenna Chineneye 2021) found that negative ads may stimulate voter turnout. Which is what has been happening even in the current 2023 political campaign that is going on in the country as approved by Independent National Electoral Commission INEC? So much promotion of candidate is on the rise by the so called spoke persons of political parties. They have divulged and applied all manner of vulgarity in trying to promote their candidate and destroy their opponents.

According to Nwanmuoh, Emmanuel Ejiofo; Anene, Jane Nwakaego; Obi Okonkwo, Linus Chimagufunam, Okoronkwo, Uchenna Chineneye (2021), When Nigeria changed from military autocracy to civil democracy on May 29, 1999, its citizens hoped that democratic values, especially the rights of political expression and criticism that were well abused during the years of military rule, would be over in the country. Nigerians hoped that political repression
which found expression with past military regimes would be consigned to the dustbin of history. However, what we are faced with in Nigeria during electioneering is highly disturbing. The political campaigns adopt all manner of repression during political assemblage just to insult the opposition political parties during rallies. So you hardly find any liberal democracy around in Nigeria today which this system is almost becoming a norm without any one stopping it. The electoral empire INEC may have made attempts but its attempts have not yielded any good result.

It was very clear to Nigerians On May 29, 1999, when the Nigerian state escaped from the military rule hoping that after many years of military rule, the new democratic state would be the prime mover of human rights, good public relations, good governance, and civil liberties, especially freedom of expression, political ideology, issue-based campaigns and free and fair election. All these hopes are only imagined in the current scheme of things. These hopes were anchored on the belief that the worst form of democracy is more tolerable than the most benevolent dictatorship. Nigerians hoped that the new democratic dispensation would mark the end of the use of repressive institutions that were created by the 1999 out-going military to violate constitutionally protected civil liberties, including the rights of political expression, rallies and assembly. Nigerian government explained that it arrested opposition politicians and disbanded political rallies and assemblies to maintain public order and safety. The government further explained that it took these actions pursuant to the provisions of the Public Order Act, a 1979 statute that empowered the police to stop unauthorized rallies in the interest of public safety (Guardian, December 5, 2006 in Nwanmuoh, et al 2021).

**Importance of Political Public Relations and voter participation**

Political public relations is the management process by which and organization or individual political person of his purpose. Through purposeful communication and action, they seek to influence and to establish, build and maintain relationship and reputations with the public. In general Political public relations includes PR activities by all organizations and individual trying to influence politics, in addition political parties, candidates, government and public sector agencies and other various interest groups also put efforts in the process and outcome. It is all about efforts and applying ideas which is critical at all stages of political PR. Political PR is not limited to simple information dissemination and exchange for peripherally involved in publics. In this wise it is no doubt that the custodian of elections in Nigeria the independent national electoral commission as an organization has also applied political public relations to fast track the need for voter participation Nigeria. INEC has said voter turnout across Nigeria hovered around 30 to 35 per cent of registered voters in the last two electoral cycles from 2015 and 2019. The INEC boss reiterated that while some elections recorded higher percentage of voter turnouts, it was lower in some other elections. In fact INEC reveals that some recent by-elections recorded as low as 8.3 per cent voter turnout in urban and constituencies of over 1.2 million registered voters located in the nation’s most densely populated city. It was clear that INEC were concerned about the declining voter turnout in elections in Nigeria. Factors responsible for low voter turnout were mentioned by INEC as 1) inadequate voter and civic education 2) ineffective voter mobilization 3) the fear of violence during elections 4) unfulfilled promises by elected officials 5) low public trust in state institutions ([Agency Report](https://www.premiumtimesng.com/author/agency-report): [February 9, 2021](https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/more-news/441649-voter-turnout-in-nigerian-elections-around-35-inec.html)) These factors have clearly showed that the voter participation shall continue to be low hence the government has not adequately put all this issues mentioned by INEC to check. For instance, the high level of insecurity in the country has not changed to encourage voter participation and lack of voter education especially in the rural area, where you find the highest number of voting public has not been sufficiently mobilized or adequately educated to understand the need for voter participation.

 In the recent political happenings in Nigeria, the Indigenous People of Biafra, Bandits, and Boko Haram/Islamic State for West African Province terrorists to disrupt the 2023 general elections (Solomon, Abiodun, & Gift 2022). This alone is capable of creating fear in the minds of electorate therefore keeping them away from voter participation. The trust issue is another one to defray voter participation in elections based on the low public trust of electorates to political institutions where promises are not kept by politicians. This alone is a clear indication that the voter participation will continue to remain poor until all these issues are attended to by government

**Perspective of Nigerians towards public relations practice**

It is so common knowledge that every person who is enlightened sees public relations as a profession of deceitfulness, spinning, publicity, Gin and Tonic as well as propaganda. This level of confusion in the profession has made many see practitioners as people that are only willing to promote negativity into positivity even when such is not in existence but Interestingly, PR seems to be the only discipline that vigorously embarks on “sensitization” by defining itself, essentially by what it is not. These misconceptions, according to Ajala (2005:36 in Nwanmuoh, et al 2021), “occur because public relations practitioners perform various functions. While some work in the area of product publicity, others are fundraisers, while some others are political specialists who decide what their candidate will say or do”.

**Conclusion**

As far as there is a need to govern with the people’s consent, politicians must always find ways of engaging the people through one form of communication or another. The central points of concern are media management, image management, internal communication and information management. However there is a growing need to deploy e-governance in the management of both political and public affairs to engender trust and credibility in the system. The theoretical findings from the study show that political parties do not engage political public relations meaningfully, what spokesmen do most of the time is insults and counter insults just to win cheap goals giving a bad name to the profession of public relations. These also show that political parties do not involve practitioners in their campaign strategies. Public relations as a management function that creates mutual understanding between an organization and the public is too critical to be ignored by political parties in the current political process in Nigeria. It also found that political parties’ campaign lacks ideology and political will and the public were fed with propaganda.

There were no levels playing grounds for a free, fair and credible election even in the previous elections of 2015, 2019 and currently in the 2023 campaigns and it is clear that electorates are not properly mobilized to deal with issues of voter education especially participation, and based on these findings the study looks at the following recommendations that could help political parties to achieve the desired results during campaigns, political mobilization, political image and voter education and participation .

**Recommendations**

1. *Analyzing the Competitor*: For anyone to succeed in any election**,** the study recommends that a competitor analysis is essential. A good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of your opponents can give you a huge advantage in building your campaign messaging, and campaign strategies, in head-to-head debates, and in undermining their campaign message when necessary. You may have to develop your competitor analysis worksheet to capture where you stand in relation to other candidates in the race. You must clearly define your political standing and know what you can do to succeed. This can be done on a spreadsheet list strengths and weaknesses of all candidates including yourself. On the same spreadsheet itemize each candidate's position on the key topics in the election. In this way, you will clarify where you are strong, and where you are vulnerable and be clear about your campaign messaging in relation to your competitors.
2. *You must understand the Political Landscape*: Before any political campaign strategy is put to paper, the study recommends that it is worthwhile considering the political landscape that the election will be fought. You will have to know if the political landscape is reactionary politics being practice and liberal ideas will not be well received and does the demographics of the area changing, bringing in a more urban or progressive cohort that might resist conservative ideas are some of the issues to be considered. At this level too it is important to also know what [voters think](https://www.ecanvasser.com/blog/deep-canvassing) and you understand the way in which media narratives dictate or undermine what voters think, then you have a much better base from which to develop your election strategy.
3. *Do Voter Targeting analysis*: the study recommends that it is important to do a voter analysis to know how many voter that are in your various wards. You may also go an extra mile to know the number that is likely to participate in the voting exercise, or who are likely to vote for your competitor? This aspect will really help you refine your political campaign strategy and to begin your voter targeting work from the voter databases you have assembled. No campaign expects to communicate with everyone in their wards. Ideally, you will segment your audience and just speak to those people who are likely to vote and who are either your supporters or could be convinced to vote for you. If that group of people isn’t big enough to get you elected then you should consider pulling out of the race! Sometimes it is very difficult for politicians to take this decision but this is the ideal thing to do rather than waste your precious time in the contest. Besides, it is important that you should check your voter file for any indications of propensity to vote and previous voting history or support level for your candidacy. If you don’t have this, you are likely to waste a lot of time in your campaign learning about your electorate rather than persuading them*.*
4. *Who should be hired*:this is a very important aspect in any political campaign strategy. This will be dictated by your budget but should also be based on getting the right person for the type of campaign you are running. You might be running a local campaign that needs someone with local knowledge and good contacts and character. Or, you might be running a larger campaign that requires a higher level skill-set based on media appearances and voter polling? Key positions include campaign manager, campaign consultant, digital director, field director and finance director. All, in their own way, are valuable, but only you will know what you can afford and which might give you the best return. Most importantly match your budget with how many of those seats you can fill. Remember you may be able to fill some of those roles from your own (voluntary) team.
5. *Get out the vote Strategy*: the study recommends that critical to your campaign strategy as a whole will be your Election Day and [‘get out the vote’](https://www.ecanvasser.com/blog/get-out-the-vote) political campaign strategy. Think about how you are going to mobilize your supporters on polling day and what information you will need to have collected in order to do so. Capturing voting intention from voters can be done during canvassing and used on Election Day. Understanding where your stronghold areas are can help you to do targeted work in those areas in the run-up to Election Day. Equally, any target demographics (like Veterans, or union members) can be targeted with advertising, email blasts or face-to-face. More so, write out hour-by-hour what you are going to do on Election Day to get out the vote. Then write out what resources (including information resources you will need to achieve this). Now you know what you will need to do during your campaign if you are to have a successful GOTV operation.

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