POLITICAL MARKETING AND VOTERS' LOYALTY: AN EVIDENCE FROM RIVERS STATE

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Abstract

This study examined the relationship between political marketing and voters' loyalty. A literature review of concepts such as political marketing, voters' loyalty, political psychological attachment, behavioral loyalty, ideological alignment and voters' satisfaction were done. The study examined three senatorial districts in Rivers State. A population and sample size of one hundred and eighty (180) was obtained through purposive sampling technique. Four research objectives guided this study and the corresponding four hypotheses were formulated. The Pearson product moment correlation was employed as the analytical tool in testing the formulated hypotheses. The study revealed that political marketing correlates significantly and positively to ideological alignment, behavioral loyalty, voters' psychological behavioral loyalty, ideological alignment, political marketing, psychological attachment, voters' attachment and voters' satisfaction. Following these findings, the study concluded that political marketing positively and significantly correlates voters' loyalty as demonstrated in Rivers State. Based on the findings and the reached conclusion, the study recommended that, political party should build trust and credibility, understand voters' ideologies and counter opposing negative ideologies in messages as means to politically market the party and her candidates as this will effectively enhance voters' loyalty.

Keywords: Political marketing, voters' loyalty, ideological alignment, behavioral loyalty, voters' psychological behavioral loyalty

Introduction

Customers experiencing a high level of satisfaction are likely to remain with their current service providers and maintain their accounts (Kim, Park & Jeong, 2004). Smith and Davis (2022) holds that customer loyalty is a biased behavioural response that is expressed overtime by some individuals with respect to one or more alternatives out of a set of alternatives. Wilson and Johnson (2023) assert that, the importance of customer loyalty is its close link to the firm's continued survival and future growth. Loyalty can be seen as both an attitudinal and behavioural dimension. Customers who are behaviourally loyal to a firm show more favourable disposition towards the firm relative to competitors (Morris & Roberts, 2022). Lachapelle and Johnson (2023) in their study explores how digital platforms and social media strategies impact voter perceptions and acceptability, and they argued that personalized content and targeted ads have significantly altered the landscape of political marketing, influencing voter behavior and engagement in new ways. Similarly, Smith and Davis (2022) maintained the role of authenticity in political messaging as a prerequisite effect on voter trust and acceptability, and as such, proposed that voters are more likely to respond positively to messages that they perceive as genuine and transparent, which has implications for political marketing strategies. Kim and Lee (2024) conclude that while advertisements can significantly influence voter attitudes, the effect varies based on the advertisement's content, format, and the political climate. Baker and Lewis (2023) review recent research on the use of emotional appeals in political marketing and their impact on voter loyalty. They conclude that emotional

appeals can be highly effective in fostering deeper emotional connections with voters, thereby increasing their loyalty. One major question that remains in the heart of any business, be it politics, buying and selling, manufacturing, and so on and so forth, is how can our customers remain loyal to our brand?

Green and Lee (2022, p.215) define voter loyalty as "the psychological and behavioral attachment of voters to a specific political party or candidate, characterized by a habitual pattern of support and a resistance to switching allegiance based on changing conditions or new information". In the same manner, Johnson and Baker (2024) maintained that voter loyalty is "the enduring allegiance of voters to a particular political entity, reflecting both their historical support and their ongoing trust and identification with that entity". From the ongoing discussions, one can identify the importance of voters' loyalty to any election. Voter loyalty provides political parties and candidates with a stable and predictable base of support, and this stability is crucial for long-term planning and strategy. According to Ewing and Thomas (2023, p295), "voter loyalty contributes to the electoral stability of political parties by ensuring a reliable pool of supporters, which aids in the development of long-term strategies and policy planning". Similarly, Kline and Patel (2022, p52) note that "high levels of voter loyalty can reduce the need for extensive campaign efforts to secure votes, thereby improving the efficiency of campaign resource allocation". Loyal voters often require less convincing during election campaigns, which allows parties to allocate resources more effectively. Persistent voter loyalty can lead to more effective policy implementation. When voters consistently support a party or candidate, it enables the political actor to pursue and implement their policy agenda with greater confidence. "Loyal voter bases are instrumental in providing the political support needed to pursue and sustain policy initiatives" (Watson & Hughes, 2023, p.58). Loyalty can enhance the perceived credibility of political candidates. Green and Lee (2022, p.220) argue that "candidates with a loyal following are often seen as more credible and trustworthy, as their consistent support is viewed as a sign of effectiveness and alignment with voter values".

Voter satisfaction with the performance of a party or candidate can influence loyalty. If voters are satisfied with the achievements and governance of their preferred candidate or party, they are likely to remain loyal. "Satisfaction with the performance of a political entity is a crucial dimension of voter loyalty, affecting both the stability and strength of the support" (Green & Lee, 2022, p. 218). The loyalty of voters may be as a result of their party attachments, which involves the extent to which voters identify with a particular political party as part of their personal identity. Johnson and Baker (2024) describe party identification as a situation in which the political party becomes a core component of the voter's identity, influencing their long-term support. Some are loyal to parties based on political alignment with ideas. Ideological alignment refers to the degree to which voters' values and beliefs align with those of the political party or candidate they support. In the words of Watson and Hughes (2023, p.56), "ideological alignment is a key factor influencing voter loyalty, as it reflects the extent to which voters' personal values and beliefs match the positions and policies of their preferred political actors". "Psychological attachment is a critical dimension of voter loyalty, which is the emotional and cognitive bonds that voters form with political entities" (Ewing & Thomas, 2023, p.290). The essence for which voters become loyal to a party, may be their actual voting behavior, which is reflecting their consistent support for a party or candidate across different elections. Kline and Patel (2022, p.50) define behavioral loyalty as "the consistent electoral support exhibited by voters over time, which demonstrates their ongoing commitment to a particular party or candidate". The major aim of most political parties' campaigns, electioneering, and strategies are geared towards the attainment of voters' psychological attachment, behavioral loyalty, voters' ideological alignment and gaining voters' satisfaction. In the words of Chen and Zhang (2024) explore how digital engagement strategies, such as social media interaction and online events, contribute to voter loyalty, and the findings indicated that effective digital engagement as a marketing strategy can strengthen voter allegiance by maintaining ongoing, meaningful interactions with constituents. This implies that political marketing could be one of the ways to give answers to the quest of winning voters' loyalty.

Lees-Marshment (2024, p.45) defines political marketing as "the process of designing, implementing, and managing political strategies aimed at achieving electoral success, which involves understanding voter needs, crafting persuasive messages, and utilizing various communication channels". It was on this backdrop that Patel and O'Brien (2023) address the ethical challenges faced by political marketers, particularly in relation to voter manipulation and privacy concerns, and they argue for a balanced approach that maintains campaign effectiveness while upholding ethical standards. Turner and Wilson (2023) review the transition from traditional political marketing methods to data-driven approaches, and highlight how big data and analytics have reshaped strategies for engaging voters, leading to more targeted and potentially more effective political campaigns. Following the foregoing discussions, this paper will examine how political marketing relates to voters' loyalty, as evidenced in Rivers State.

Literature Review

Political Marketing

Kotler and Armstrong (2022:341) define political marketing as "the application of marketing strategies and techniques to political campaigns, aiming to influence voter behavior, build candidate or party brands, and manage public perceptions to achieve electoral success". Scammell (2022, p.136) describes political marketing as "the strategic use of marketing concepts and methods in the political domain to shape public opinion, manage candidate or party image, and enhance electoral success through targeted communication and engagement strategies". Political marketing as "the integration of marketing techniques into political campaigns and public relations efforts to effectively communicate with voters, influence their perceptions, and achieve political goals" (Norris, 2023, 90). Smith and Harrison (2023, p.208) described political marketing as "the use of marketing practices to shape political messages, develop campaign strategies, and engage with voters, with the goal of securing electoral support and enhancing the political image of candidates or parties". Baines and Egan (2023,p.3) define political marketing as "the process of applying marketing techniques to the political field, aimed at understanding voter needs, crafting persuasive messages, and executing strategies to achieve electoral success and build a positive political brand". Political marketing is "the application of marketing strategies and tools to political campaigns to effectively engage with voters, utilizing new media and digital platforms to influence voter attitudes and behavior" (Baines and O'Shaughnessy, 2023, p.50).

Ogundele (2023, p.48) defines political marketing as "the strategic application of marketing principles to political campaigns and governance in Nigeria, focusing on voter engagement, brand positioning of candidates, and the use of media to influence electoral outcomes". Political marketing is "a systematic approach to managing political campaigns that involves understanding voter behavior, crafting targeted messages, and utilizing various media channels to build and sustain political support" (Adebayo & Yusuf, 2022, 88). Ezeani (2023, p.213) maintained that political marketing is "the use of marketing techniques to promote political candidates and parties, focusing on strategic communication, voter segmentation, and campaign management to influence public opinion and voting behavior". In the words of Akinyemi and Okoye (2024, p.32), political marketing is "the integration of digital marketing strategies into political campaigns, through the utilization of social media, online advertising, and digital engageent tools to connect with voters and enhance campaign effectiveness and voters' acceptability". Furthermore, they argued that political marketing is crucial for adapting to changing media landscapes, emphasizing that the use of digital marketing strategies allows political campaigns to effectively navigate the evolving media environment and reach voters through various online platforms. Nwogugu and Chukwu (2023, p.123) averred that political marketing is "the strategic process of applying marketing concepts to political campaigns, and programs with a focus on adapting global marketing practices to the unique socio-political and cultural dynamics".

Voters' Loyalty

Miller and Shanks (2023, p.132) define voter loyalty as "a psychological and behavioral commitment to a political party or candidate, characterized by consistent voting patterns and support across multiple

elections, often driven by deep-seated ideological or emotional factors". Voter loyalty is "a stable and enduring attachment to a political party or candidate that guides voter preferences and behavior, often resulting in repeated support in elections and a resistance to changing political allegiance" (Lee & Lee, 2024, p.98). Smith and Harrison (2023, p,208) describe voter loyalty as "the degree of consistent support and allegiance that voters demonstrate towards a political party or candidate, which influences their voting behavior and political engagement over time". Voter loyalty is characterized as "a form of political attachment where voters consistently support a particular party or candidate due to shared values, past experiences, or party identification, leading to predictable voting behavior" (Miller & Stokes, 2022, p. 640).Blais and Rubenson (2023, p.117) define voter loyalty as "the ongoing support for a political party or candidate that reflects an individual voter's stable preferences and alignment with the party's or candidate's ideological or policy positions". Nwogugu and Chukwu (2022, p.124) define voter loyalty in Nigeria as "a sustained and unwavering support for political parties or candidates, often influenced by ethnic affiliations, historical loyalty, and the perceived effectiveness of the party's or candidate's previous performance". Voter loyalty is characterized as "a deep-seated and persistent allegiance to political entities, shaped by both traditional political engagement and modern digital interactions, reflecting enduring political and social bonds" (Akinyemi & Okoye, 2024, p.34). Ogundele (2022, p.50) defines voter loyalty in Nigeria as "a consistent and enduring support for a particular political party or candidate, driven by a combination of socio-economic factors, ethnic affiliations, and historical political experiences that shape voter behavior".

Akinola and Ojo (2023) describe voters' loyalty as the degree of attachment or allegiance that voters exhibit towards a political party or candidate, often influenced by historical, socio-economic, and ethnic affiliations, and they further argued that voter loyalty can significantly impact electoral outcomes and party stability. Ibrahim (2022) defines voters' loyalty as the consistent support that voters provide to a specific political party or candidate over multiple election cycles. This loyalty is often rooted in shared political ideologies or long-standing party affiliation, and it can be a crucial determinant of electoral success. Furthermore, they argued that voters' loyalty plays a role in shaping policy formulation and governance, and noted that political leaders who recognize and respond to the loyalty of their supporters are better positioned to implement policies that align with their base's expectations, thus enhancing governance effectiveness. Eze and Olaniyan (2021) view voters' loyalty as a multidimensional construct that encompasses emotional attachment, ideological alignment, and habitual voting patterns. They emphasize that such voter loyalty is often intertwined with ethnic and regional affiliations, which play a critical role in shaping electoral behaviors. Usman (2024) discusses voters' loyalty as the propensity of voters to remain consistently supportive of a political party or candidate due to a combination of personal beliefs, social networks, and political expectations, and he maintained that loyalty is often challenged by fluctuating political dynamics and candidate performance. Furthermore, they explained that understanding voters' loyalty is essential for developing effective campaign strategies and political messaging, as it helps in analyzing voting patterns, so as to enable political parties to tailor their campaigns to address the concerns and preferences of their loyal base, thus enhancing their electoral strategies.

Voters' Ideological Alignment
Akinola (2023) defines voters' ideological alignment in Nigeria as the alignment of electoral choices with broader ideological positions, influenced by socio-economic status, regional factors, and political history. Furthermore, he argued that in Nigerian voters often align with parties and candidates that reflect their personal and community values, especially in relation to issues such as corruption, economic development, and ethnic representation. Onyekuru (2024) describes ideological alignment as a dynamic interplay between voters' expectations and the political strategies of candidates, and maintained that ideological alignment is not static but evolves with shifts in public opinion, economic conditions, and political scandals, which can realign voter support towards parties that promise reform and transparency. Similarly, Olabode (2023) views ideological alignment through the lens of regionalism and ethnicity in Nigeria, and asserts that voters' ideological preferences are significantly shaped by ethnic affiliations and

regional interests, leading to a fragmented political landscape where ideological alignment often mirrors ethnic and regional loyalties rather than national issues. Uche (2023) defines ideological alignment as the extent to which voters' political preferences align with the ideological stances of political parties and candidates, and he emphasize the role of economic disparities and educational levels in shaping these alignments, noting that voters with higher education levels are more likely to align with ideologies promoting economic reforms and social justice. Ezeani (2022) explores ideological alignment as the correlation between voter preferences and the political ideologies of parties or candidates, and further argues that in Nigeria, ideological alignment is often influenced by the perceived effectiveness of governance, the delivery of public goods, and the political party's stance on national unity and development. Jones (2023) defines voters' ideological alignment as the degree to which an individual's political preferences align with the ideological positions of political parties or candidates. Furthermore, he notes that ideological alignment is often shaped by personal beliefs, party platforms, and the broader socio-political context, emphasizing that ideological alignment is critical for understanding electoral behavior and party support.

Smith (2022) describes ideological alignment as a reflection of how voters' policy preferences and political values correspond with those of political candidates and parties, and it is influenced by factors such as economic conditions, cultural values, and historical contexts, which collectively shape voters' support for specific political ideologies. Chen (2024) describes voters' ideological alignment as the extent to which their political preferences are consistent with their party's ideological stance, which is dynamic and can shift due to changing political environments, economic conditions, and evolving social issues, making it a crucial factor in understanding voter behavior. Nguyen (2023) presents ideological alignment as the match between voters' political preferences and the ideological positions of political entities, and further argues that it is shaped by both individual-level factors, such as personal values and experiences, and macro-level factors, including party platforms and national issues. In the same manner, Gonzalez (2023) maintained that voters' ideological alignment is the degree to which voters' policy preferences are aligned with the ideological frameworks of their preferred parties or candidates, and noted it is influenced by a variety of factors including media influence, party messaging, and socio-economic conditions.

Behavioral Loyalty
Jacoby and Chestnut (2021, p.56) define behavioral loyalty as "a consumer's repeated purchase of a particular brand or product, which is observable through actual purchasing patterns and frequency", and they emphasize that behavioral loyalty is evident through consistent actions rather than expressed attitudes. Dick and Basu (2022, p.118) describe behavioral loyalty as "a situation where a consumer consistently engages in the repeated purchase of a brand or service due to habitual actions, often driven by past experiences and the convenience of the purchasing process". Oliver (2022, p.78) perspective on behavioral loyalty is "the observable and measurable patterns of repeat purchasing and brand usage, reflecting the consumer's decision to continually choose the same brand or product over alternatives", and he views behavioral loyalty as an outcome of satisfaction and preference. Behavioral loyalty as "a consumer's commitment to repeatedly engage in purchasing the same brand or product, which is manifest through quantifiable behaviors such as purchase frequency and volume" (Kumar & Shah, 2023, p145). They highlight the importance of quantifiable metrics in measuring loyalty. According to Zeithaml, Bitner, and Gremler (2022, p. 205) behavioral loyalty is defined as "the consistent and repeated purchase of a particular product or service, demonstrated through tracking purchasing habits over time and analyzing the consumer's propensity to continue buying". Ojo and Ojo (2023, p.45) define behavioral loyalty as "the tendency of consumers to consistently purchase from a specific brand or service provider over time, demonstrating their commitment through repeated transactions and favorable recommendations". According to Adeoye and Odunlami (2022, p.72), behavioral loyalty is described as "a measurable outcome of repeated consumer transactions with a particular brand or service, often driven by satisfaction and perceived value". Behavioral loyalty is characterized as "a pattern of repeat purchase behavior that reflects a consumer's sustained preference for a brand or product over time, influenced by

past experiences and satisfaction levels" (Ibrahim & Akinbode, 2024, 88). Adebayo and Durojaiye (2023, p.112) define it as "a consumer's consistent engagement and repurchase behavior towards a brand, indicating their loyalty through a sustained relationship and preference".

Political Psychological Attachment
Political attachment is often conceptualized as a form of partisan identity, which reflects an individual's alignment with a political party and the emotional connection they feel towards it, and it influences voting behavior and political attitudes, often leading individuals to favor policies and candidates that align with their partisan identity (Green, Palmquist, & Schickler, 2002). According to Hetherington and Rudolph (2022), political attachment can also be viewed as a psychological investment where voters develop a deep-seated emotional commitment to political ideologies or figures, and this is integral to understanding voter behavior, as it can lead to strong partisan loyalty and influence electoral outcomes. Political attachment is sometimes described as a function of political socialization, wherein individuals' political affiliations and attitudes are shaped by their social environment and early experiences with politics, and is not static but evolves based on continuous social and political interactions (Jennings & Niemi, 2017). Political attachment is also framed within the context of identity politics, where voters' political affiliations are closely tied to their personal identities, including factors like race, gender, and socioeconomic status, it highlights how identity can shape political attachment and influence partisan alignment (Masuoka, & Junn, 2022). Similarly, Bartels and Jackman (2021) describe political attachment as both a source of stability and a potential driver of change in political preferences, and maintained that it can sustain consistent political behavior, while shifts in attachment can lead to changes in voting patterns and policy support. In Nigeria, political attachment is often closely tied to ethnic and regional identities, and it shapes political affiliations and behaviors significantly due to ethnic loyalties and regional affiliations, which can override other political considerations (Ezeani, 2021). Political attachment in Nigeria can also be understood through the lens of clientelism and patronage networks, and is often developed based on reciprocal relationships where political support is exchanged for material benefits (Ojo, 2022). Agbaje (2023) maintained that beyond ethnic or clientelist ties, political attachment in Nigeria can also be influenced by ideological alignment, allowing voters to form attachments to political parties or candidates based on shared ideologies or policy preferences. Similarly, Nwankwo (2024) in Nigeria, political attachment is frequently shaped by family and legacy factors, and that voters often inherit political preferences and attachments from their families or influential figures within their communities, reflecting the strong role of social networks in shaping political behavior. Political attachment can also be seen as a reaction to the actions and behaviors of political elites, and in Nigeria, voters' political attachments are often shaped by their responses to elite behavior, including performance, corruption, and public perception of political leaders (Olowu, 2022). Furthermore, it could be seen that political attachment in Nigeria is influenced by a range of factors including ethnic identity, clientelism, ideology, family, and the behavior of political elites.

Voters' Satisfaction
Folarin (2023) defines voters' satisfaction in Nigeria as the degree to which voters' expectations and needs are met by the electoral process and outcomes, including the performance of elected officials and the transparency of the electoral process. According to Okunoye and Olufemi (2022), voters' satisfaction in Nigeria is conceptualized as a multifaceted construct that encompasses voter contentment with electoral outcomes, trust in electoral institutions, and the perceived fairness of the electoral process. Adeyemi (2021) describes voters' satisfaction in Nigeria as the level of approval and contentment expressed by voters regarding the performance of elected representatives and the efficiency of the electoral process. Nwankwo and Ojo (2020) define voters' satisfaction as the extent to which voters feel that their voices are heard, their votes are counted fairly, and their needs are addressed by the political system. Pappas (2023) defines voters' satisfaction as the degree to which voters perceive that their electoral preferences and expectations are met by the political system, including the responsiveness and effectiveness of elected representatives. Liu and Zhang (2022) describe voters' satisfaction as the level of contentment voters

experience with the overall electoral process, including aspects like fairness, transparency, and the perceived integrity of electoral institutions. Roberts and Harris (2021) conceptualize voters' satisfaction as a measure of how well the electoral outcomes align with voters' expectations, considering factors like policy fulfillment and the quality of governance provided by elected officials. Kaczmarek (2020) maintained that voters' satisfaction is the extent to which voters feel their electoral participation has led to desired political outcomes and the degree of trust they place in the electoral system and its processes. Nunn and Rodriguez (2019) highlight that voters' satisfaction involves both the immediate gratification of electoral choices and the longer-term impact of electoral outcomes on voters' well-being and trust in the political system.
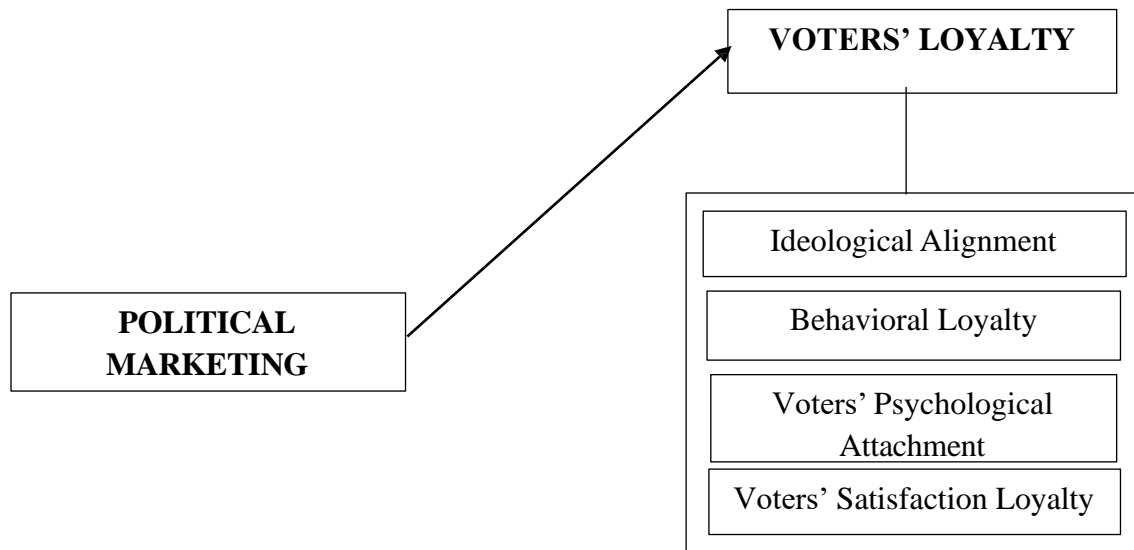
Fig. 1: Conceptual Framework for the relationship between political marketing and voters' loyalty.
Source: Researcher's Conceptualization, 2024.

Empirical On Political Marketing and Voters' Loyalty
Political marketing involves a range of activities designed to influence voters' perceptions and behaviors, including campaign advertising, branding, and voter engagement strategies. Political branding involves creating a distinct image and identity for a candidate or party that resonates with voters' values and beliefs. According to Smith and Johnson (2023), successful branding strategies can strengthen emotional connections between voters and candidates, leading to increased loyalty, and they further argued that when voters perceive a candidate's brand as authentic and aligned with their values, they are more likely to remain loyal. Liu and Zhang (2022) explore how digital campaigns, including social media and targeted advertising, impact voters' loyalty, and concluded that personalized communication through digital platforms can enhance voter engagement and loyalty by addressing individual preferences and concerns, which helps in building a stronger connection between voters and candidates, fostering long-term loyalty. Roberts and Harris (2021) analyze how different types of political ads, whether it is emotional, rational, or negative can affect voters' loyalty. Furthermore, their findings suggest that emotional ads that evoke strong feelings or align with voters' existing beliefs tend to enhance loyalty more effectively than rational or negative ads, and it creates a deep-seated commitment to a candidate or party.

Nunn and Rodriguez (2019) highlight that candidates who actively engage with voters through town hall meetings, personal outreach, and community involvement are more likely to foster loyalty, and they suggested that interactive engagement creates a sense of personal connection and trust, which enhances voter commitment to the candidate or party. According to Nwaogbe and Obasi (2023), effective political branding in Nigeria involves creating a compelling and relatable image of candidates and parties. Their study highlights that candidates who successfully brand themselves as champions of key issues, such as anti-corruption or economic development, are more likely to secure and maintain voter loyalty. The authenticity and alignment of the candidate's brand with the electorate's values play a significant role in fostering long-term support. According to Akinyele and Alabi (2022), digital and social media platforms have become essential tools for engaging with voters. Their research indicates that targeted social media campaigns and digital advertising significantly enhance voters' loyalty by allowing candidates to address

specific voter concerns and preferences directly. The personalized and interactive nature of these platforms helps to build stronger connections and trust between voters and candidates. Olufemi and Ijeoma (2021) explore how different types of political ads, including positive, negative, and issue-based advertisements, affect voter loyalty in Nigeria. Their findings suggest that positive ads, which emphasize the candidate's achievements and future plans, are more effective in building long-term voter loyalty compared to negative ads that attack opponents. Issue-based ads that address specific voter concerns also contribute to sustained loyalty by aligning with voters' interests and values (Olufemi & Ijeoma, 2021).

According to Onuoha and Eze (2020), candidates who actively engage with voters through town hall meetings, community events, and personalized outreach efforts are more likely to build and sustain loyalty. Their study emphasizes that these engagement practices help to establish a personal connection and trust, which are vital for long-term voter commitment. According to Ojo and Okeke (2022), political campaigns in Nigeria increasingly employ digital platforms, leveraging social media to reach and engage voters. These strategies include targeted advertising, online mobilization, and the use of influencers to sway public opinion (Adebayo, 2021). The growing use of digital marketing reflects a broader global trend but is particularly pronounced in Nigeria, where social media platforms like Twitter and Facebook play a crucial role in shaping political narratives (Olukotun, 2023). Voter loyalty in Nigeria is heavily influenced by the effectiveness of political marketing campaigns. Research by Ibrahim and Musa (2023) indicates that personalized and interactive political marketing approaches significantly enhance voter engagement and loyalty. By creating tailored messages that resonate with specific voter demographics, political campaigns can build stronger emotional connections with the electorate. This approach contrasts with traditional, broad-based campaign strategies that often fail to address the nuanced preferences of individual voters (Nwosu, 2021). Adebayo (2021) found that political parties that invest in comprehensive marketing strategies, including both offline and online methods, are more successful in cultivating voter loyalty. According to Olukotun (2023), the proliferation of misinformation and fake news on social media has complicated the political landscape. This issue undermines the effectiveness of political marketing efforts by distorting voter perceptions and contributing to political polarization. Additionally, the high cost of sophisticated marketing campaigns can create disparities between well-funded parties and those with limited resources, potentially affecting the fairness of the electoral process (Ibrahim & Musa, 2023). The following hypotheses were formulated specifically for this study:

Ho$_1$: There is no significant relationship between political marketing and voters' ideological alignment in Rivers State.
Ho$_2$: There is no significant relationship between political marketing and voters' behavioral loyalty in Rivers State.
Ho$_3$: There is no significant relationship between political marketing and voters' psychological attachment to political parties or candidates in Rivers State.
Ho$_4$: There is no significant relationship between political marketing and voters' satisfaction in Rivers State.

Methodology
In this study, the cross-sectional research design was adopted. The population of this study cut across the electorates in Rivers State. It includes; political parties in Rivers State members, and other voters. The criteria for this selection is based on the fact that the study is examining variables such as ideological alignment, political psychological attachment, voters' satisfaction, behavioral loyalty and political marketing, that relates to both partisans and other voters. The study was limited to political parties with much popularity from the last concluded general elections, which are limited to the All-Progressives Congress (APC), the People's Democratic Party (PDP), and the Labour Party (LP). The electorates in this study aren't limited to the non-partisans, but also include those that are partisans. Partisans are card-carrying members of political parties. The study further concentrated on the three senatorial districts in Rivers State, Rivers East Senatorial District, Rivers West Senatorial District, and the Rivers South-East

Senatorial District, from which two Local Government Areas (LGAs), was selected from each, forming a total of six (6) LGAs to be sampled. These are Rivers East (the Port Harcourt City and the Obio/Akpor LGAs), Rivers West (Gokana and Khana LGAs) and the Rivers South-East (Asari Toru and Opobo Nkoro LGAs). From each of the LGAs, thirty (30) members were purposively selected, ten (10) partisans and twenty (20) non-partisans. This amounted to a population of one hundred and eighty (180) respondents. The purposive sampling technique was adopted for this study. "Purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling technique where researchers select participants based on specific characteristics or qualities that align with the research objectives (Yegidis & Myers, 2019, 17). This technique is often adopted "when the researcher needs to focus on a particular group with certain attributes, making it useful for in-depth studies where the sample needs to be representative of a particular population segment" (Liamputtong, 2020, 8).

Table 1: The population distribution

S/N	LGAs	Partisans	Non-Partisans	Total
1	Obio/Akpor	10	20	30
2	Port Harcourt City	10	20	30
3	Gokana	10	20	30
4	Khana	10	20	30
5	Asari Toru	10	20	30
6	Opobo Nkoro	10	20	30
		60	**120**	**180**

Source: Field Data, 2024.

The research obtained its data only from the primary source. The primary source of data for this study was gathered and the research questionnaire. Simple and direct questions were used throughout the questionnaire, and complicated ones were avoided. The 5-point Likert scale is used to quantify the study's variables, including the predictor and criterion variables (5 being very high, 4 being high, 3 being moderate, 2 being low, and 1 being extremely low).The criterion variable, which is voters' loyalty was operationalized in political psychological attachment, ideological alignment, behavioral loyalty and voters' satisfaction, and these were measured against the predictor variable, which is political marketing. These variables had a total of 25 items. Data collected was coded, keyed in the computer and analyzed with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), version 25. The Pearson Product Moment Correlation was the adopted inferential statistics which was used to test the formulated hypotheses.

Analysis and Discussion

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 or 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 influence is on this basis assessed using the Pearson value interpretations provided" by Ahaiauzu and Asawo (2016:56):

Table 2: Description on Range of correlation Pearson values and the corresponding level of association

Range of Pearson value with positive and negative sign values	Strength of Association
± 0.80 – 0.99	Very Strong
± 0.60 – 0.79	Strong
± 0.40 – 0.59	Moderate
± 0.20 – 0.39	Weak
± 0.00 – 0.19	Very Weak

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

The values of Pearson 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 Pearson value. 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 2.

Table 3:Table showing correlation between political marketing and the measures of loyalty

		P_Marketin	Ideo_Align	Behav_Loy	Psy_Attach	Vot_Satisfy
P_Marketi n	Pearson Correlation	1	.758**	.688**	.694**	.679**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	180	180	180	180	180
Ideo_Alig n	Pearson Correlation	.758**	1	.899**	.905**	.936**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000	.000
	N	180	180	180	180	180
Behav_Lo y	Pearson Correlation	.688**	.899**	1	.793**	.860**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000	.000
	N	180	180	180	180	180
Psy_Attac h	Pearson Correlation	.694**	.905**	.793**	1	.887**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000		.000
	N	180	180	180	180	180
Vot_Satisf y	Pearson Correlation	.679**	.936**	.860**	.887**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	
	N	180	180	180	180	180

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
Source: Research Data, 2024

Ho₁: There is no significant relationship between political marketing and voters' ideological alignment in Rivers State.

With a Pearson value of 0.758, table 3 demonstrates a significant and high correlation between political marketing and voter's ideological alignment. This suggests that the correlation between the two variables is strong. As observed from the responses gathered from voters in Rivers State, there is a significant positive correlation between political marketing and voters' ideological alignment in Rivers State. 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. According to this, "political marketing and voters' ideological alignment as observed from Rivers State voters" are strongly related.

Ho₂: There is no significant relationship between political marketing and voters' behavioral loyalty in Rivers State.
With a Pearson value of 0.688, it implies a significant and high association between political marketing and voters' behavioral loyalty. This suggests that the correlation between the two variables is strong. 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

analysis were done. According to this, "political marketing and voters' behavioral loyalty in Rivers State" are strongly related.

Ho₃: There is no significant relationship between political marketing and voters' psychological attachment to political parties or candidates in Rivers State.

With a Pearson value of 0.694, there is a significant and high correlation between political marketing and voters' psychological attachment to political parties or candidates in Rivers State. This suggests that the correlation between the two variables is strong. Following the result output, the null hypothesis is rejected and its alternative form accepted as 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. According to this, "political marketing and voters' psychological attachment to political parties or candidates in Rivers State" are strongly and significantly related.

Ho₄: There is no significant relationship between political marketing and voters' satisfaction in Rivers State.

With a Pearson value of 0.679, there is a significant and high correlation between political marketing and voters' satisfaction in Rivers State. This suggests that the correlation between the two variables is strong. Following the result output, the null hypothesis is rejected and its alternative form accepted as 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. According to this, "political marketing and voters' satisfaction in Rivers State" are strongly and significantly related.

Relationship between political marketing and voters' ideological alignment in Rivers State

Mason (2018) in his work on political marketing and partisan identity politics influence voter alignment and ideological polarization, through providing a comprehensive look at the interplay between political marketing and voter behavior. The research argued that political marketing influences voters' ideological alignment positively. Similarly, Enli (2020) maintained that social media platforms as a tool of political marketing strategy, influence political communication and voter alignment, and it further highlighted that this role of digital political marketing shapes ideological perspectives favorably in the direction of the party or its candidate. Also, Babalola (2020) analyzes how political advertising which is a tool in political marketing affects ideological shifts among Nigerian voters, with a focus on recent electoral cycles and campaign strategies. He argued that political marketing plays a vital role in establishing voters' ideological alignment. Thus, this research infers that political marketing results in voters' ideological alignment.

Relationship between political marketing and voters' behavioral loyalty in Rivers State

Jiboku (2022) investigates how social media marketing, which represents an aspect of political marketing can be used to influenced voter loyalty, as evident during the 2019 general elections in Nigeria, by focusing on the effectiveness of digital campaign strategies. The study argued that voting behavior is affected by political marketing positively. Similarly, Adewale (2020) focused on how political advertising as a political marketing strategy affected voter commitment and loyalty during the 2023 presidential campaigns in Nigeria, and maintained that it is a strong practical shift for voters' behavioral loyalty. Therefore, this research infers that political marketing helps in enhancing voters' behavioral loyalty for political parties or her candidates.

Relationship between political marketing and voters' psychological attachment to political parties or candidates in Rivers State.

Ogunleye (2023) examined political branding and voter psychological attachment in Nigeria, and noted that political branding is a political marketing strategy that increases voters' psychological attachment in

Nigeria through its roles of candidate image and party identity enhancements. Similarly, Adekunle (2022) explored how emotional appeals as a political marketing strategy affect psychological attachment in Nigeria. the study argued that emotional appeals is used in Nigerian political campaigns influence voters' psychological attachment to candidates and parties. Also, Bello (2021) in his work on social media marketing and psychological attachment in Nigerian politics, maintained that social media marketing, which is a branch of political marketing shapes voters' psychological attachment in Nigeria, through the establishment of emotional bonds via online interactions. Thus, this research infers that political marketing brings about a resultant increase in voters' political psychological attachment.

Relationship between political marketing and voters' satisfaction in Rivers State
Adamu (2023) examined political marketing and voter satisfaction in Nigeria and observed that political marketing strategies impact voter satisfaction in Nigeria and improves successful electoral processes. Durojaye (2022) also looked at the impact of political campaign communication, as political marketing strategy on voter satisfaction, as evident from Nigerian elections, and maintained that political campaign communication affects voter satisfaction in Nigerian elections positively. Similarly, Ogunleye (2021), examined candidate engagement as a political marketing strategy and voter satisfaction in Nigeria. The study found that direct engagement between candidates and voters, facilitated by political marketing, and impacts voter satisfaction in Nigeria positively. Thus, this research infers that political marketing brings about a resultant increase in voters' satisfaction.

Conclusion
Following the findings on the relationship between political marketing and voters' loyalty as evidenced from Rivers State, Nigeria, it affirmed that political marketing substantially contributes too strategically voters' loyalty to political parties and her candidates. This position also builds on the observed correlation between the proxies of political marketing, and the various highpoints were reached;
  i.   Political marketing contributes to strategically position voters' ideological alignment to political party/candidates.
  ii. Political marketing is one of the major concepts that correlates to voters' behavioral loyalty to political parties and her candidates.
  iii. Political marketing relates to strategically position voters' psychological attachment to political party and its candidates.
  iv. Political marketing relates to strategically position voters' satisfaction with political party and its candidates.
Therefore, following these pointers, it was concluded that political marketing substantially correlates to voters' loyalty as evident in the electoral spheres of Rivers State, Nigeria.

Recommendations
The present study aimed to establish an empirical relationship between the dimensions of political marketing and voters' loyalty as evident in Rivers State, Nigeria. Based on the findings and conclusions, the study recommends that political parties as organisations should;
  i.   Build trust and credibility, understand voters' ideologies and counter opposing negative ideologies in messages as means to politically market the party and her candidates as this will effectively enhance voters' loyalty.
  ii. Advise the party candidates to adhere and deliver their campaign promises to the electorates and engage directly with voters as a political marketing strategy as this will build positive voting behavioral loyalty over time.
  iii. Establish that their members and candidates should develop an authentic brand identity, good emotional appeals through shared values perceptions, and a sense of community as these will enhance voters' psychological attachment.

iv. Establish that their members and candidates should understand voters' needs, deliver relevant messages and clear speeches, demonstrate responsiveness and build good relationships as these will enhance voters' satisfaction.

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