POLITICAL PARTY ADVERTISING AND THE DYNAMICS OF ELECTORAL POLITICS IN A CHANGING ZIMBABWE

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Zimbabwe has held elections regularly since independence from Britain in 1980

- Elections were a formality until 1999
- Mock pluralism, “drama of pretence”
- Formation of a formidable opposition
- End of government monopoly in the press
- Government losing a crucial referendum
- Economic decline after the failure of ESAP
- Fermenting social and political crisis
The 2008 Elections

- Unique in many respects
- Harmonized elections - gubernatorial, parliamentary & presidential
- Economic crisis had reached its peak (hyper-inflation, collapse of social services, despair)
- Conflict resolution - high expectations about the outcome of the election.
- However, outcome was ill-suited to break the impasse
# 2008 Election Results: Table 1
House of Assembly

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Leader</th>
<th>No of candidates</th>
<th>Elected</th>
<th>Popular Vote</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Zanu PF</td>
<td>Robert Mugabe</td>
<td>219</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>1,110,649</td>
<td>45.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MDC-T</td>
<td>Morgan Tsvangirai</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>1,041,176</td>
<td>42.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MDC-M</td>
<td>Arthur Mutamba</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>202,259</td>
<td>8.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indepent</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>54,254</td>
<td>2.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>13,735</td>
<td>0.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>773</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>2,421,973</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 2: Presidential Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Candidate</th>
<th>Votes</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ZANU PF</td>
<td>Robert Mugabe</td>
<td>1,079,730</td>
<td>43.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MDC</td>
<td>Morgan Tsvangirai</td>
<td>1,195,562</td>
<td>47.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INDEPENDENT</td>
<td>Simba Makoni</td>
<td>207,470</td>
<td>8.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INDEPENDENT</td>
<td>Langton Towungana</td>
<td>14,503</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INVALIDATED</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTALS</td>
<td></td>
<td>2,497,265</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Political System

- Parliamentary system of governance
- Bicameral legislature, Cabinet, Judiciary
- Executive President - head of state and government, also commander-in-chief of the defence forces
- Prime Minister Co-head of government
- President + MPs + Senators directory elected using First-Past the Post Electoral System
- Competition for office exists at both inter-party and intra-party levels.
The Media System

- Media system reflects contours of the country’s changing political history
- Immediate post independence-policy ambivalence-centralized broadcasting and liberalized press system.
- Golden years of the press-1990-1999
- Dark Decade of the Press, 2000-2010- acrimonious state/press relations,
- Restrictive Media Laws, Closure of Newspapers-shrinking of media space
Political advertising has its history in the colonial period

- Used by Ian Smith regime to wage a propaganda war against the guerillas- pamphlets + press adverts.
- Zimbabwe-Rhodesia era to woe the population
- Post independence elections- political advertising rather rudimentary.

- The development of PA largely tied to country’s political system- shaped by the monolithic political system which characterized much of post-independence
- In the late 1999 things began to change-emergency of a vibrant civil society able to project alternative views.
Three broad categories of literature:

1 Impact of political advertising on voting behaviour - empirical studies on cognitive effects of political advertising - no consensus on actual impact - opinion is divided and varies between:

- It can educate, inform or entertain voters (Johnston & Kaid, 2002; Pauly, 2009)
- It can increase voter engagement with political issues (Jaeho, 2007; Brader, 2005).
- It can demobilize voters
2 Rhetorical Analysis of Political Advertising

- Linked to 1 above but focuses more on strategies, styles, formats, and techniques used by political candidates and parties.
- Studies try to understand the content of political advertising e.g. identifying visions of candidates and parties.
3 Functional analysis of Political advertising

- Lit explores normative functions of political advertising using thematic content analysis (Merrit, 1984; Benoit, 1997; 1998, 2000; Lee and Benoit, 2004)

- Political advertising serve three functions, namely (1) Acclaim (2) To attack opponents (3) To defend Self
Second level of categorization of political advertising:

1. Issue advertising
2. Personality advertising

Connections between the two categories:

- Ideals are easier to acclaim
- Incidence of defence correlates with frequency of attacks
- Incumbents use more acclaims than challengers who tend to rely more on attacks
## Political Ads according to type

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Acclaim</th>
<th>Attack</th>
<th>Defence</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Zanu PF</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MDC-T</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Makoni</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total: 43
Reflects the skewed access to the media space

Overwhelming dominance of attack advertising reflects the acrimony that characterized the election

High stake election

More attacks from the incumbent party than from the opposition - the opposition had nothing to lose while the incumbent had everything to lose

The economic collapse created opportunities for the opposition to make claims.

Political adverts combine claims, attacks and defences. For example:
Appendix 1: SEVEN DEGREES, NOT GRADE SEvens

R.G. has given your children ELEVEN years of education.
R.G. has built schools throughout the country.
R.G. has achieved 96% literacy rate, making Zimbabwe the second best on the continent.
R.G. has given your children twelve Universities.
R.G. has given you a technical college in every province.
R.G. is giving your children computers to modernise education.

But someone who knows himself only too well, thinks you deserve LESS...

He's ignored Adult Literacy availed by R.G.
He uses Timba to fight access to education.

NOW HE WANTS TO TURN ZIMBABWE INTO A NATION OF GRADE SEvens!

VOTE ZANU PF
The advert combines both attacks and proclamations. Zanu PF attacking the MDC leader for “lack of education” while making proclamations about its past achievements in the field of education i.e.

- 11 years of education
- Schools, colleges,
- 96% literacy rate
- 12 Universities etc
- “But someone who knows himself too well, thinks you deserve less”
- Attacks Tsvangirai for spurning adult literacy programmes availed by Mugabe
Appendix 2: Attack & Acclaim

WHAT HE MEANS WHEN HE SAYS HE IS MORE....

VOTE ZANU PF

WITH R.G. MUGABE, ZIMBABWE WILL NEVER BE A COLONY AGAIN!
APPENDIX 3: Attack & Acclaim

- Advert portrays Tsvangirai as a puppet and someone who does not have the national interest.
- Also claims that “WITH R.G. MUGABE ZIMBABWE WILL NEVER A COLONY AGAIN”
Although the primary aim is to attack, the text at the bottom “WITH R.G. MUGABE, ZIMBABWE WILL NEVER BE A COLONY AGAIN” makes certain claims about the attacker. This shows that political adverts are multi-dimensional rather than one dimensional.
APPENDIX 4: ACCLAIM & ATTACK

The War is OVER

If you are tired of fighting, we can all agree that war is a necessity. We are not fighting for anybody else. We are fighting for our country.

No More. No More Dividing Us.

It is a new day for us. We are not only fighting for our country, but for the world. We are not fighting for our country, but for the world.

You cannot feed people with clenched fists.

Fists don't create employment.

The MDC Economic Plan will create an open society for growth, innovation and fair wages. The world will be proud of Zimbabwe's freedom and the economic growth of Zimbabwe's people, not only the rich.

Now is the time for our hands, our heads, and our hearts to unite and show the world what we can do. We can do it when we look forward and not backward.

The Change you can trust

MDC

MAN OF THE PEOPLE. MAN FOR THE PEOPLE. MAN OF PEACE

LOOKING FOR ACCOMMODATION?

Try Houses to Rent column in The Herald & The Sunday Mail Classifieds Section
An MDC advert charged that Zanu PF sought to divide the country by harping on the colonial past. MDC able to attack as well as make policy claims:

“You cannot feed people with clenched fists. Fists don’t create employment. The MDC Economic plan will create an open society for growth, investment and fair wages that we can be proud of. Economic freedom is achievable when we fight for the economic good of Zimbabwe’s people, not only its politics”.

APPENDIX 4: ATTACK & ACCLAIM
APPENDIX 5: ACCLIAM & ATTACK

our health care is sick

FREE ARV's

we have the treatment

The cost of drugs is rocketing sending our national temperature into convulsions.

We cannot carry on heading ourselves this way.

Quickly affordable health care which rewards our hard-working health workers, nurses and doctors.

Morgan is more for health

MDC (Tsvangirai) X
The MDC attacks Zanu PF for presiding over the collapse of the health sector ("Our health is sick").

- The metaphor of sickness can be extended to the economy

- MDC also makes proclamations/promises:
  - "Free ARVs. We have the treatment. The cost of drugs skyrockets sending our national temperature into convulsions. We cannot treating ourselves this way. Quality, affordable health care which rewards hard working health workers, nurses, and doctors"
Independent presidential candidate Simba Makoni claimed that he was a unifier, supposedly because he did not belong to a particular party.

Implying that party politics was polarizing the nation. Claimed that he was working with everybody to ensure that “all Zimbabweans participate in nation-building regardless of political affiliation.

At the same time attacked both Zanu PF and the MDC, the former, for being caught up in “internal conflicts” and the former for “threatening not to work with certain groups”.

This shows that political adverts can combine different functions even within the same advert rather than simply serving a single purpose.
Never before in the country’s electoral history had the economy become the single most factor in an election than the 2008 election.

Inevitably, the economy became the most enduring focal point of campaign messages.

Different political formations used different techniques to accentuate the parlous state economy.
You have paid a high price already
They have blamed everyone else, but only one thing hasn’t changed...

End more blame
Now is the time for change you can trust

MAN OF THE PEOPLE. MAN FOR THE PEOPLE. MAN OF PEACE.

MDC

MORGAN IS MORE ECONOMY
MDC’s metaphor of a diminishing loaf of bread since the 1990s

Signifying increasing poverty among the population.

The message is: retaining Zanu PF is tantamount to condemning oneself to a life of penury.

Politics and economics intricately interlinked

Political advertising becomes a medium upon which people’s concerns, fears, aspirations are amplified.
Bread and Butter: Appendix 9
MDC used a supermarket trolley overflowing with commodities to show that the party envisaged a prosperous future for the nation. Part of the text read: “When you have good ideas, you get full shelves, Zimbabwe’s manufacturers and retailers, and workers are not to blame for empty shelves. A responsible government creates full shelves. Now go shopping”. Advert also made indirect attack to government clampdown on business. While attacking the party also managed to portray itself as able to formulate business-friendly policies.
Zanu PF foreground land as the single most important national question

Attacked the MDC for wanting to reverse the gains of independence-implying the land reform.

Projected 2008 elections as being about securing with finality the country’s land which was equivalent to its sovereignty.
Land belongs to the People of Zimbabwe. It is their Birthright, Sovereignty, Identity and Economy.

Throughout colonial history, Land was the Number One Grievance for our People. It was and remains the foremost National Question.

The First, Second and Third Chimurenga were about freeing our Land to regain our Sovereignty.

Zanu (PF) is the only Party which championed and struggled for People’s right to their land.

Through the Third Chimurenga, Zanu PF delivered Land to the people of Zimbabwe. The opposition chose to collaborate with white settlers who funded it.

Zanu (PF) declares that Land has come for ever. The era of colonial white settlers is over and anyone working to reverse Land Reforms is an enemy of the Zimbabwean People. The Land must be defended by any means
Apart from making policy proclamations about the economy, Zanu PF also attacks its opponent, whom it accused of trying to “sign away Zimbabwe”

Claimed that the country was “already working” after it instituted the land reform and other programmes to underpin it.

Presidential aspirant Simba Makoni blamed Zanu PF for the economic collapse.
Zanu PF attributed the country’s economic collapse to sanctions imposed by the Western Countries and the United States of America.

Inevitably sanctions became a major focus of its political messaging.

It sought to prove that sanctions were real and were to blame for the economic ruin. Through these adverts Zanu PF is able to acclaim, attack and defend.
Use of testimonials to prove that sanctions were real and affecting the ordinary citizens, contrary to their “detractors” who said they were “targeted” at the political leadership.

Example, an advert Headlined “SANCTIONS ARE REAL” partly read:

“IN CASE YOU DID NOT KNOW, THIS IS WHAT AMERICA’S GEORGE BUSH DID TO YOUR COUNTRY ONLY THIS TUESDAY”
They tell you sanctions are "smart", "targeted" or even non-existent.

The British government is considering preventing the Zimbabwe cricket team touring England next summer.

These sports people and ordinary Zimbabweans will tell you they are not!

Vote ZANU PF to defeat puppets, Bush, Brown and their sanctions.
Do not sign away your Beautiful Zimbabwe

"On the latter two points, we work closely with the MDC on the measures that we should take in respect of Zimbabwe, although I am afraid that these measures and sanctions, although we have them in place, are of limited effect on the Mugabe regime."

- Tony Blair in the British House of Commons

VOTE ZANU PF
For the defence of your Land and Sovereignty
Sanctions ctd.

- Directly quotation of statements from unfriendly sources to enhance credibility
- Testimonials also enable the sponsor messages that are multi-dimensional i.e. acclaim, attack, and defend
Post 2000 elections associated with escalation of political violence.
Most of these held in the context of the land reform programme, which was violent.
MDC blamed Zanu PF for the violence.
Zanu PF sought to portray MDC is a violent party.
Again use of direct statements attributable to unfriendly sources
In their OWN WORDS...

"The Tsvangirai faction has shown no inclination whatsoever to deal with this cancer of violence! If we do not prevent leaders with violent inclinations from gaining high office within the opposition, they will naturally assume influential positions in government once they have done so, they will then have access to all the levers of national governmental power, a far more frightening prospect. Given their nature, which is there for all to see, there is no doubt that they will continue to use violent methods they employed in opposition, in government."

- David Coltart

"We must be democratic before we are in fact in government. We must be non-violent before we are in government; we must be transparent and we must not be corrupt... To that extent, you can squarely say that for some of us, we believe that the tendencies we saw in Mr Tsvangirai and those around him tended to demonstrate to us that we were facing a real possibility that we will have a false beginning in Zimbabwe, a false change..."

- Welshman Ncube

VOTE ZANU PF
FOR A PEACEFUL, DEMOCRATIC, SOVEREIGN ZIMBABWE
Human Rights and Violence: Accusations and Counter Accusations: Appendix 13

WHAT HE MEANS...

...WHEN HE SAYS
HE IS MORE

VOTE ZANU PF
ZANU PF
FOR PEACE AND STABILITY
WHAT HE MEANS WHEN HE SAYS HE IS MORE

VOTE ZANU PF FOR PEACE AND STABILITY
Human Rights and Violence: Accusations and Counter Accusations: Appendix 15
While Zanu PF sought to portray MDC as prone to violence, the MDC projected a liberal human rights framework, while at the same time portraying Zanu PF as a callous, uncaring and therefore not fit to rule.

This demonstrates that political advertising can be a terrain upon which hegemonic and counter-hegemonic views can be negotiated.
The 2008 elections in Zimbabwe demonstrate how political advertising is reciprocally linked with political culture of a nation.

Political advertising connects with popular culture.

Some political adverts reflect the adversarial and acrimony that characterized 2008 elections.

Politics viewed as a zero-sum game, where the winner takes all.

Such an approach has the potential to breed a culture of intolerance.
CONVERGENCE OF POPULAR CULTURE AND POLITICS: ATHLETICS METAPHOR

APPENDIX 16
While some can only be substitutes without the stamina to last the full match…
And others can only play with fists of pain…
Only Simba Makoni has the strength to last the whole match and play in peace and love
Simba…KaOne
Simba Makoni
Simba Kuvanhu! aMandla EBANTWINI! (POWER TO THE PEOPLE)
The use of sports metaphors reflects gives insights on people’s perceptions of politics.

Politics demands, rigor, skill and tact.

Such metaphors are appropriate in so as they reflect the plots, sub-plots, political machinations, party-splits, defections simulated unity, political gamesmanship.

Through these adverts one is able to gain insights on how politics in Zimbabwe could been viewed as game, a dirty game, characterized by rough play.
Conclusion

- Political adverts are multi-dimensional and can serve different functions rather than a single function.
- Campaign messages mirror the contours marked by the country’s changing socio-political landscape.
- The nature of political adverts discussed demonstrate that political practices have the potential to influence the nature of political advertising.
Conclusion

Thank you for Listening