POLITICAL MARKETING AND SUSTAINABLE LEADERSHIP: A STUDY ON STUDENTS' UNION GOVERNMENT (SUG) OF FEDERAL UNIVERSITY, OTUOKE, BAYELSA STATE

By

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Abstract
Political Marketing is essential to shape opinions, influence choice and galvanizes support for candidates and causes. This study "Political Marketing and sustainable leadership. Is aimed to examine the effect of political marketing products on sustainable leadership of student union government (SUG), federal university Otuoke, Bayelsa state. The research questions and hypotheses were postulated accordingly. Theoretical framework of the study anchored on Social exchange and transformational leadership theories. Survey design was adopted for the study. The population of this study comprised forty two thousand undergraduate students. Sample size of two hundred and eleven (211) was arrived at, using Slovin's formular. Questionnaire was used for data collection through personal method. Cronbach's coefficient Alpha reliability was tested while descriptive statistics was used to determine the Mean and Standard Deviation of responses while multiple regression analysis technique was adopted in testing the hypotheses with the aid of SPSS version 23. The results of the analysis revealed that, student welfare has significant effect on sustainable leadership. The study recommends that, University administration should Provide student leaders with mentorship and advice on sustainable leadership concepts and ethical marketing techniques, among other things.

Keywords: student interest, student welfare, good relationship, infrastructural development, security.

Introduction

University student union governments (SUGs) offer leadership, advocacy, and community-building opportunities while acting as miniature versions of broader political structures. It represents the interests and rights of the student body and

speaks for them (Okeke, 2010). To the faculty, administration, and other stakeholders at the university, the SUG speaks for all of the students. By addressing topics like academic regulations, tuition costs, campus amenities, student services, and disciplinary actions, it promotes the rights and welfare of students. Students frequently receive a range of welfare services from the SUG, including financial aid, academic support, health care, and leisure activities. In order to improve student life and create a feeling of community, it plans social gatherings, cultural events, and extracurricular activities (Tom & Ndaeyo, 2024). The SUG acts as a conduit for information and comments between the student body and the university administration. It frequently takes part in university governance by serving on a number of boards and committees (Ugwuanyi et al., 2022).

Political marketing is essential to these associations because it shapes opinions, influences choices, and galvanizes support for candidates and their causes. But the conventional emphasis on winning elections and acquiring power needs to be balanced with a dedication to sustainable leadership that places a higher priority on long-term goals, moral behavior, responsibility, inclusivity, and the welfare of the whole student body. If the necessary is not followed, the student body may reject a certain SUG in power entirely or in part. This investigation explores how political marketing and long-term leadership intersect in the Federal University Otuoke, Bayelsa State, students' union government. While highlighting the significance of incorporating sustainable leadership principles to promote responsible governance, inclusive decision-making, positive change, and trust within the university community as a dividend of democratically elected executives to the entire student community, political marketing and SUG also apply marketing principles and techniques to student elections and campaigns. According to records, several Nigerian political leaders in the past and present have held a position in SUG while still in college, which has helped them maintain strong leadership in macropolitical positions.

Effective leadership is essential for organizations to grow. Another way to think of leadership is as a process that takes place in a group setting. This implies that a leader may be chosen or may come to the fore. A leader who receives a formal title or position is said to be assigned. Conversely, an emergent leader is one who is promoted to a leadership role by the group and has the backing of other members. In either scenario, a leader guides the group toward achieving a particular objective

(Peter et al., 2015; Ambasa, 2013). The student body holds the SUG accountable, and it is expected that it will conduct itself responsibly and openly. Government, public policy, attitudes, and political imperatives can all suffer from poor governance and corruption, which can also erode public trust in officials. Positive trust, on the other hand, encourages future development and sustainability by incorporating the public in the process. In contemporary societies and administrations, trust is an essential element that is crucial to the development of a democratic system.

The researcher hopes to comprehend the subtleties of the ideas that student leaders must contend with as they attempt to strike a balance between the need to serve their constituents' best interests and the pursuit of power by examining the dynamics of political marketing and sustainable leadership in this context. In addition to enabling students to become knowledgeable, involved citizens who support the long-term growth of their university and beyond, this study illuminates the methods and tactics that can foster moral, successful, and sustainable leadership. Numerous empirical studies on leadership styles and political marketing have been conducted worldwide, according to the literature, but none have examined the current study's contexts or, consequently, its driving forces. Therefore, the research question is: How much does political marketing affect Federal University Otuoke Bayelsa State students' sustainable leadership of SUG?

Literature Review and Theoretical Foundation

According to the social exchange theory, a cost-benefit analysis is the basis for forming relationships. Candidates offer specific "benefits" (promises, policies, representation) in return for "costs" (votes, support, and time) during student elections. The dynamics of communication between student leaders and their constituents, as well as the ways in which marketing tactics impact these interactions, are examined with the aid of this theory. It can also be used to comprehend how the student body might view sustainable leadership practices as a "benefit."

The transformational leadership theory is a framework that examines whether student leaders are transformational and how these traits relate to their marketing strategies. It focuses on leaders who inspire and motivate followers to achieve extraordinary things and emphasizes vision, inspiration, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. This theory is highly relevant to sustainable leadership because transformational leaders are frequently focused on long-term goals and creating positive change, which is in line with the fundamental principles of sustainability.

Political Marketing: An Overview

According to Bigi (2017), political marketing is the use of marketing concepts and

strategies to advance political parties, candidates, and ideas. It entails comprehending the requirements and preferences of voters, crafting an engaging message, and reaching and influencing them through a variety of communication channels (Lees-Marshment, 2002). In order to influence public opinion and election results, political marketing is an intricate and dynamic field (Kaskeala, 2010). Political actors can connect with voters, convey their messages, and accomplish their objectives by knowing the underlying concepts and strategies (Savigny 2010). To maintain a sound and democratic political process, it is crucial to uphold moral principles and put the interests of the people first. The study of political marketing looks at how marketing strategies are applied during political processes (Udoms, Atakpa, & Ndaeyo, 2024; Ndaeyo, Atakpa, & Ekan, 2025).

According to Osuagwu (2008) and Baines et al. (2001), it is a relatively new area of study within the political sciences and communication discipline. But it has drawn interest from academics as well as from politicians, government officials, and other political professionals (Sofyan, 2015). According to him, political marketing is the result of the union of politics and marketing, just as political marketing suggests the application of marketing strategies, tactics, and tools in the political process. In Nigerian political campaigns, it ranks third. Political marketing is a technique and activity that represents the way that marketing has infiltrated the political sphere. Among the widely used techniques in political marketing are political advertising, celebrity endorsements, the participation of expert consultants and campaign managers, online campaigning, mobile phone canvassing, segmentation, and microtargeting (Sofyan, 2015).

Political Product: In political marketing, a political party, individual or candidate, or ideology can be viewed as a political product. The candidate's past life, personal image, or the party itself are the main factors influencing the product's success (Ndubisi, 2023). According to Newman (1999) in Osuagwu (2008), political marketing's main goals are to influence public perceptions and opinions, advance political ideologies, win elections and political contests, and pass laws and referenda that address the needs, wants, and desires of target market segments. Political parties and candidates can develop ideas for the product they wish to produce with the aid of marketing. Issues and work programs based on issues that voters (the community) face can be the product (Waldi et al., 2018). The focus of political marketing is on using marketing to help candidates and political parties become more effective and efficient in establishing reciprocal relationships with society and constituents (Briandana, 2019b). Political marketing differs from commercial marketing, according to Harmes (2020). Political marketing is a concept that explains how a political party or candidate can develop programs that address real issues rather than trying to "sell" them to voters. In addition, political marketing is a strategy for preserving a reciprocal relationship with the public. Schedler (2002) asserts that a candidate must comprehend the market, specifically the voters and their fundamental requirements as well as the goals and

constituencies they wish to represent, in order to succeed. To sum up, political marketing is the overarching goal and calculated measures and strategies used by political parties or candidates to market and sell political goods to voters (the general public). Political marketing encompasses a wider range of political activities in addition to political campaigning activities prior to elections. These activities include offering political palatals and candidate programs as political products in order to create public images, symbols, and programs (Aspinall, et al, 2019).

Polical Organization:

A political organization is any entity involved in the political process that engages in political activities with the goal of developing a political system by achieving clearly defined political goals (Ndubisi, 2023). Political candidates and parties must use a political marketing strategy to avoid losing the support of the electorate (Ahmad et al., 2014; Budianto et al., 2020). Kartini et al. (2018) state that political marketing should not be used to sell political parties or candidates to voters in an exploitative manner, but rather should explain how a candidate could create programs that address real issues. According to Aspinall, et al, (2019), political marketing is "the party or candidates' use of opinion research and environmental analysis to produce and promote a competitive offering which will help realize organizational aims and satisfy groups of electors in exchange for their votes." Political marketing is something that a political party or candidate must consistently do in order to gain the trust of the public and improve their reputation (Vitak et al., 2015).

Political Market Target:

According to Ndubisi (2023), political structures are shaped by a variety of factors, including economics, cultures, traditions, ideologies, and values. A transaction is regarded as a distinct, one-time event in the traditional market, but this is not the case in the political market (Gemmeson, 1987in Ndubisi, 2023). As opposed to a traditional one, a political market exchange takes place over an extended period of time, during which the candidate or political organization fulfills the pledge given to the electorate in return for their votes. Globalisation and the information revolution have been crucial in transforming traditional political campaigning into

one of the most expert and advanced marketing strategies in terms of both pattern and content. Three characteristics are typical of the political market: counter consumption, social affirmation, and the ideological charge of the market (Durmaz & Direkci, 2015 in Ndubisi, 2023). It is said that if a political party applies the marketing philosophy, it will try to satisfy the needs and wants of the electorates, resulting in voter satisfaction and gaining electoral support to meet its own goals of satisfying the needs and wants of the electorates (Marshment, 2006).

Sustainability Leadership:

A type of management and leadership behavior that seeks to satisfy stakeholder needs and advance the enterprise's core business in order to generate long-term value for all stakeholders; sustainable leadership is the result of integrating sustainable development and leadership. It stresses the balanced development of the economy, society, and environment and goes beyond green transformational leadership and responsible leadership. It is also helpful in assisting businesses in achieving sustainable and profitable growth, and it has emerged as a prominent area of current leadership research (Avery et al., 2011a,b). A model of sustainable leadership based on the educational organization was developed by Hargreaves et al. (2004). They proposed that sustainable leadership in education refers to the following: the ability to maintain and promote extensive and in-depth learning (depth); to make plans and preparations for succession in order to ensure long-term development (sustainability); to emphasize dialogue, common development, and shared decision-making (breadth); to actively share knowledge and resources with neighboring schools or communities to improve the environment (justice); to avoid consistency and standardization of policies, curricula, assessments, and training to promote diversity (diversity); to provide incentive and reward policies to attract talent and build a network to enhance mutual learning and support (resourcefulness); to respect the past experience of leadership behavior and learn from it in the pursuit of creating a better future (maintenance).

student union leadership: The concept of education for sustainable development, or ESD, has become essential to academic programs, student activities, and community engagement. ESD seeks to give students the values, information, and abilities they need to help create a more sustainable future. However, student leadership and engagement are crucial for ESD initiatives to succeed. Students who are actively involved in their studies have a higher chance of internalizing sustainability concepts, putting them to use in practical settings, and becoming proactive changemakers in their communities and later in their careers. According to Toman et al. (2024), student leadership on ESD guarantees that education is appropriate for its intended use, addresses student priorities, and strengthens ties between institutions and students. Effective student leadership that is made up of selfless leaders who share the goal of helping students succeed by completing tasks on time and correctly is known as sustainable student leadership. These leaders don't wait for things to happen; instead, they create favorable outcomes and stop bad ones from occurring. In 2022, Ugwuanyi et al.

political marketing and sustainable leadership: Understanding how businesses can gain and maintain a competitive advantage over the long run is the ultimate goal of marketing strategy (Kotler, 1991 as cited in Masiello, et al, 2018). In order to secure long-term survival or superior profitability, any type of organization that must operate in a competitive environment must meet market demands more effectively than rival organizations and gain the respect and legitimacy of external

stakeholders (O'Cass, 2011, et al.). In light of this, the field of political marketing research emerged as a result of the more recent, sophisticated, and fervent application of marketing theoretical frameworks and tools to politics (Baines et al., 2003; Smith, 2005). Political marketing, which "is about political organizations adapting business-marketing concepts and techniques to help them to achieve their goals," is situated at the intersection of political studies and marketing (Lees-Marshment, 2001). Therefore, despite the significant distinctions between politics and traditional marketing fields, research has demonstrated that applying marketing concepts can give scholars a strong theoretical foundation for examining and comprehending the performance differences between parties as well as sustainable competitive advantage in the contemporary political sphere (O'Cass, 2011 & Henneberg, 2009).

Model of Political Marketing:
According to Durmaz et al. (2015), the media closely follows the three-stage model of political marketing, which is the most widely used model for political marketing and communication distribution. Stage Model of Political Marketing: The three-stage model is the most widely used theory of political marketing. This has been widely acknowledged and discussed in scholarly literature, claim Durmaz & Direkci (2015). This model comprises three distinct stages, specifically Step 1: Determine customer demand, incorporate it into the product and messaging, and adjust as necessary. Step 2: Notify customers of product modifications made in response to their needs and demands in order to meet their social and economic objectives. Step 3: Delivering the improved product, which will better meet customer demands and generate progressively higher profits for the party, business, or organization. According to Durmaz et al. (2015), the three-stage model was predicated on the idea that parties determine what voters desire through the use of techniques such as focus group feedback and advanced polling techniques (Savigny, 2010). In order to win an election, parties and candidates typically pay attention to specific public opinion and offer the electorate a product they might find desirable.

FIG1: Conceptual framework of the study
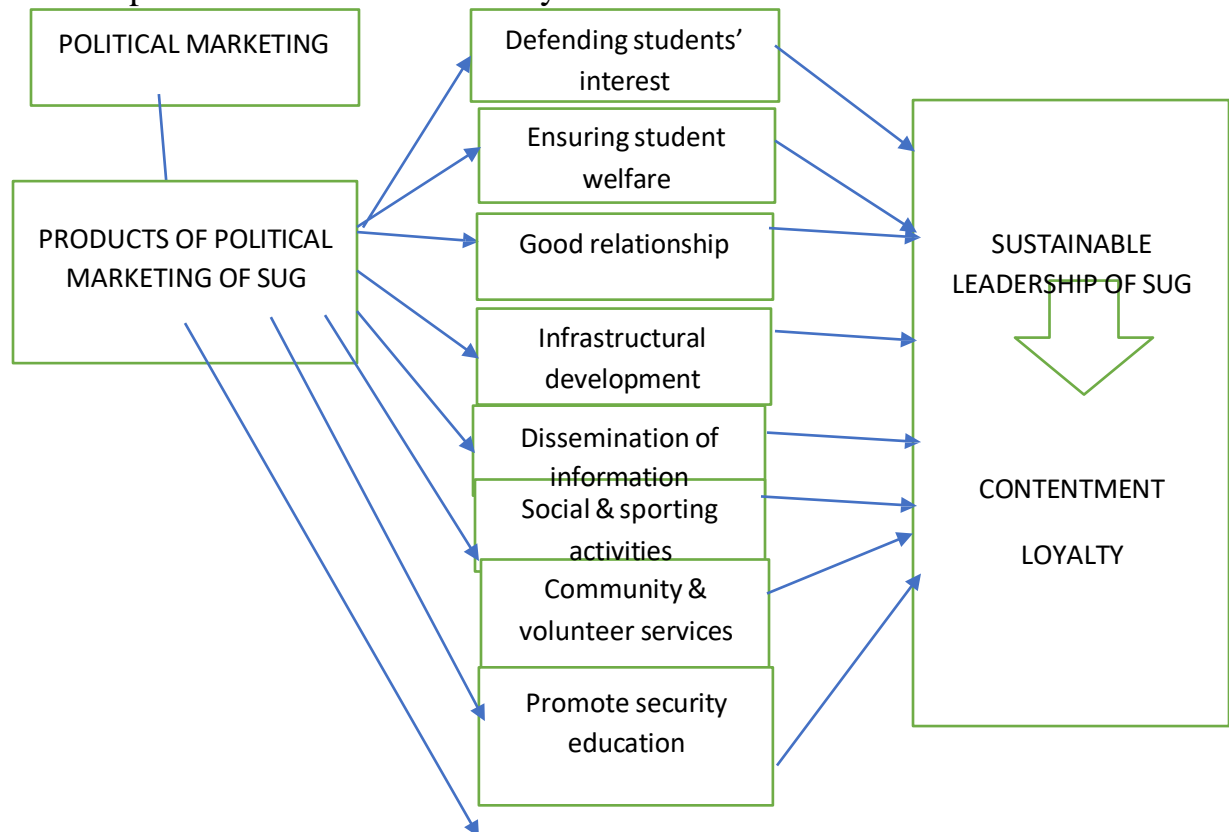
SOURCE: Researcher' desk, 2025

The above conceptual model highlights the concept of political marketing pointing to products as dimension. Product of political marketing in respect to SUG is responsible to the following ideologies: defending student's interest, ensuring students welfare, good relationship with university management, infrastructural development, dissemination of information, social and sporting activities, community and volunteer services, and promotion of security education among students. Having positive significant relationship with sustainable leadership can bring about contentment and loyalty among the students with leadership of SUG.

Methodology

The study is Quantitative research focused on the collection of detailed amounts of primary data from relatively small samples of subjects and adopted cross-sectional survey research design, which enable the collection of necessary primary data from target respondents at a single period of time for analysis and generation of findings. The population of this study comprised forty two thousand undergraduate students according to available records, (2025). Sample size of two hundred and eleven (211) was arrived at, using Slovin's formular. Students in 200, 300, and 400 levels were chosen in their respective classes and given questionnaires to complete as part of the survey using the convenience sampling technique. 100 level students were not included in the study due to their inexperience and involvement in SUG leadership. This sampling strategy is suitable for the study and minimizes sampling time waste by allowing the researcher to collect the necessary primary data from

respondents who were readily available, easily accessible, and willing to complete the questionnaire survey. Primary sources provided the data needed to conduct this study. A well-designed 5-point likert scale questionnaire, named ―Political Marketing and Sustainable Leadership Questionnaire (PMSLQ)‖ is the instrument used for this study. The survey instrument was validated by the researcher using the content validation model. Copies of the questionnaire were distributed to Marketing and Political science specialists who could provide expert commentary to make sure the statements aligned with the study's goals. The degree to which an instrument can yield consistent results over time is a measure of its reliability. The Cronbach Alpha method and the test-retest option were used to assess the instrument's reliability. Thirty students participated in a pilot survey. The standardized coefficient and alpha were calculated from the data.

The multiple regression model is shown below:

$$Y = b_o + b_1x_1 + b_2x_2 + b_3x_3 + b_4x_4 + b_5x_5 + b_6x_6 + b_7x_7 + b_8x_8 + E$$

Where:

Y = sustainable leadership

b_1 = defending students interest

b_2 = Ensuring students welfare

b_3 = Good relationship

b_4 = Infrastructural development

b_5 = Dissemination of information

b_6 = Social and sporting activities

b_7 = Community and volunteering

b_8 = Promote security education

(b_1 to b_8 are regression coefficients)

b_o = Slope

E = Error

Multiple regression analysis was used to test the study's eight hypotheses, descriptive statistics indices were used for measurement, and a table of percentages of data provided a better understanding of the data flow. Version 23 of the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) was used to compute the analysis electronically.

By expressing the relationship between variables mathematically, regression analysis explains the nature of the relationship between variables. The independent variable in regression analysis is x, and the dependent variable is y. Multiple regression analysis is primarily used to determine which sub-variable of political marketing product has the biggest impact on sustainable leadership for a subset of SUG in federal university, Otuoke, Bayelsa State.

Analysis And Dicussion

Table 1 showing Cronbach's coefficient Alpha reliability **and Descriptive Statistics**

	N	NO. items	Reliability	Mean	Std. Deviation
Students' interest	202	2	71.9	6.67	2.107
Student welfare	202	2	51.2	6.67	2.107
Good relationship	202	2	66.8	6.04	2.227
Infrastructural development	202	2	57.2	4.09	2.053
Dissemination of information	202	2	69.6	7.07	2.248
Social sporting activities	202	2	71.2	6.90	2.302
Community services	202	2	65.2	4.70	2.195
Promote security	202	2	64.0	6.12	2.287
Sustainable Leadership	202	4	79.3	11.21	3.921
Valid N (listwise)	202				

SOURC: SPSS output, 2025

According to Table 1, two hundred and eleven copies of questionnaire were administered after which two hundred and two copies representing 95.73 percent were retrieved and used for the study analysis while nine copies representing 4.27 percent were discarded. Each construct's coefficient result fell between 0.512 and 0.793. If a construct's coefficient alpha is 0.50 and above, it is considered reliable. The scales' adequate average inter-item correlation was guaranteed by these criteria. It guarantees that throughout the survey, the constructs stay internally consistent. Construct-by-construct mean ratings showed that, dissemination of information ranks highest with mean of 7.07 and SD of 2.248 while infrastructural development ranks the lowest with mean value of 4.09 and SD of 2.053.

Table 2 showing Model Summary of political marketing and sustainable leadership

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.765[a]	.586	.571	2.569

a. Predictors: (Constant), promote security, infrastructural development, student welfare, social & sporting activities, good relationship, Dissemination of information, community services

Table 3 showing ANOVA of political marketing and sustainable leadership

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	1809.148	7	258.450	39.150	.000[b]
	Residual	1280.699	194	6.602		
	Total	3089.847	201			

a. Dependent Variable: sustainable Leadership
b. Predictors: (Constant), promote security, infrastructural development, student welfare, social sporting activities, good relationship, Dissemination of information, community services

Table 4 showing Coefficients of political marketing and sustainable leadership

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	-.391	.772		-.507	.613
	Student welfare	.315	.107	.169	2.940	.004
	Good relationship	.220	.107	.125	2.064	.040
	Infrastructural development	.316	.111	.165	2.851	.005
	Dissemination of information	.460	.106	.264	4.357	.000
	Social sporting activities	-.008	.100	-.005	-.082	.935
	Community services	.231	.109	.129	2.117	.036
	Promote security	.425	.103	.248	4.128	.000

a. Dependent Variable: sustainable Leadership

Tables 2, 3, and 4 displayed the results of the multiple regression analysis carried out on the effect between political marketing on sustainable leadership of SUG. The model summary depicted in table 2 shows a strong of political marketing on sustainable leadership, with a value of 76.50 percent. The R^2 value of 0.586 signifies 58.60 percent of the variance in sustainable leadership can be anticipated based on the political marketing dimensions. The statistical results in Table 3, reveals by the F-test (39.160, P< .05), demonstrates that, the independent variable effectively predicts changes in the dependent variable. This confirms that, political marketing significantly affects sustainable leadership of SUG. Table 4 shows that,

all the dimensions tested (students' interest, students' welfare, good relationship, infrastructural development, dissemination of information, social and sporting activities, community service volunteering, promote security.) exhibit significant predictive power for sustainable leadership [student welfare (B = .169; p-value = .004 < .05), good relationship (B= .125, p-value = .040< .05), infrastructure development (B = .165, p-value = .005 < .05), dissemination of information (B = .264, p-value = .000 < .05), social and sporting activities (B=-.005, p-value = .935>.05), community service (B= .129, p-value=.036 <.05),
promote security (B=.248, p-value=.000< .05). Hence, the regression results are summarized thus:

1. Student welfare has significant effect on sustainable leadership
2. Good relationship has significant effect on sustainable leadership
3. Infrastructure development has significant effect on sustainable leadership
4. Dissemination of information has a significant effect on sustainable leadership
5. Social and sporting activities does not have a significant effect on sustainable leadership
6. Community service has a significant effect on sustainable leadership
7. Promoting security has significant effect on sustainable leadership

Discussion

This study examined political marketing and sustainable leadership of SUG in federal university Otuoke, Bayelsa state. The findings revealed that, student welfare significantly affect sustainable leadership positively. In an effectively student union leadership, the basic welfare of the students should be the utmost priority. The leaders engage with businesses to regulate the prices of goods and services on campus. Ensuring good relationship between students and university management is significantly affecting sustainable leadership. This informs that, a responsible student union leadership develops strategies in creating or establishing a long-lasting cordial relationship between her members and the school management. Infrastructural development is significantly affecting sustainable leadership. Within the capacities and their own jurisdiction, a proactive student union leadership contributes to the institution's infrastructural development by building student union secretariats where correspondences could be directed, canteen and so on. Dissemination of information is positively significant on sustainable leadership which shows that, it is the duty of a proactive student union government to properly guide and direct both fresh and returning students to avoid mistakes. Promoting social and sporting activities was non-significant on sustainable leadership. This reveals that students do not really depend on their union leaders for exercising and socializing. Community and volunteering services is significantly affecting sustainable leadership. This reveals that, a proactive students union government designs various strategies through which they could give back to the community and the society at large. Promoting student's security is positively and significant on sustainable leadership. Based on this revelation, a

proactive student union government works collaboratively with the university management through their various security units to ensure the security of all students as emphasize in (Ugwuanyi, et al, 2022).

Conclusion and Recommendations

In the framework of student associations at Federal University Otuoke, Bayelsa State, this study has investigated the relationship between political marketing and sustainable leadership. The study has clarified the dynamics of student politics and its possible effects on the campus community by looking at how marketing principles are applied in student elections and how student leaders comprehend and apply sustainable leadership. The results show the intricate relationship between the need to govern morally and long-term and the ambition to win elections. While student voters must be reached and mobilized through political marketing strategies, the study emphasizes how important it is to incorporate sustainable leadership principles to make sure that student leaders put the welfare of all students first and support the university's growth. A culture of responsible and efficient governance can be fostered by following the recommendations based on the research's identification of the opportunities and challenges for promoting sustainable leadership in student associations.

The study's conclusions lead to the following suggestions for improving sustainable leadership in Federal University Otuoke student associations through successful political marketing techniques:

To improve the ability to communicate, negotiate, resolve conflicts, and make moral decisions, students should look for leadership development and training opportunities while in school.

University administration should Provide student leaders with mentorship and advice on sustainable leadership concepts and ethical marketing techniques. Lead training sessions and workshops on student rights, governance, and leadership development for future leadership benefits.

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